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Integration of geospatial, statistical and other related information

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its tenth session, held virtually on 26 and 27 August and 4 September 2020, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 10/106, in which it noted the continued efforts of the Expert Group to support statistical and geospatial integration to realise national priorities and global development agendas, welcomed the many instances in which the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework had been implemented in Member States and suggested that the Expert Group collect national experiences relating to the integration of statistical and geospatial information to further guide Member States in the implementation and operationalisation of the Framework. The Committee requested the Expert Group to continue the development of key statistical standards and processes that would strengthen the integration of statistical and geospatial information, to provide practical guidance on the production and use of integrated geospatial information, and to develop the interlinkages between the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework and the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework to further support the implementation and operationalisation of both Frameworks, including through the regional commissions and the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees. Furthermore, the Committee urged Member States to continue efforts towards the adoption and implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework and to support institutional coordination and collaboration between national statistical offices, national geospatial information agencies and other relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing implementation of the Framework, especially in the context of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

In this present report, the Expert Group includes information on its recent activities, including the development and consolidation of practical guidance to assist Member States in implementing the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework; the initial results of its global survey to diagnose readiness at the country level for implementing the Framework; a discussion of the ways in which the Expert Group has adapted its working modalities to overcome the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic; and details of its overall progress on operationalising the Framework to support the 2020 round of population censuses and the 2030 Agenda. The report is accompanied by background documents, including a working draft of a consolidated guidance document for the

* E/C.20/2021/1

Framework that includes practical guidance for Member States on implementing the Framework and details of the national experiences of countries in its implementation, and a document in which the initial outcomes and findings of the global survey are discussed.

I. Introduction

1. In making decision 10/106 at its tenth session in August 2020, the Committee of Experts urged Member States to continue efforts towards the adoption and implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF) and to support institutional coordination and collaboration between national statistical offices, national geospatial information agencies and other relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing implementation of the GSGF, especially in the context of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Committee appreciated the alignment of the work plan 2020 - 2022 with the emerging needs of both the statistical and the geospatial communities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2020 round of population and housing censuses, as key to the next phase of the work of the Expert Group to implement and operationalise the GSGF in Member States; welcomed the many instances in which the GSGF had been implemented in Member States; suggested that the Expert Group collect national experiences relating to the integration of statistical and geospatial information to further guide Member States in the implementation and operationalisation of the GSGF; and, requested the Expert Group to continue the development of key statistical standards and processes that would strengthen the integration of statistical and geospatial information, to provide practical guidance in the production and use of integrated geospatial information.

2. This present report informs the Committee of Experts on the Expert Group's activities and progress since the tenth session, including the development of the GSGF Implementation Guide; the collation of national and regional experiences of GSGF implementation; and the initial outcomes of a global survey sought to diagnose readiness at the country level for implementing the GSGF. Each of these activities aimed to align with the emerging needs of both the statistical and the geospatial communities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 2020 round of population and housing censuses. The documents are submitted for the Committee's consideration as background documents to this report.

3. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report and to express its views on the progress made by the Expert Group in the area of statistical and geospatial integration, urge countries to adopt the GSGF, and provide its guidance on the background documents: a working draft of the GSGF Implementation Guide; the collation of national and regional experiences of GSGF implementation; and the initial outcomes of the global survey to diagnose readiness at the country level for implementing the GSGF. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 42.

II. Fifty-second Session of the UN Statistical Commission

4. At its fifty-second session, held virtually on 1-3 and 5 March 2021, the United Nations Statistical Commission noted the report of the Expert Group, which summarised the activities undertaken during the intersessional period, in alignment with its work plan 2020 – 2022, including its efforts to promote the implementation and operationalisation of the GSGF at various global fora; summarising the implementation of the GSGF at the regional level; and the circulation of guidance on geocoding.

5. As part of the revised modalities of the fifty-second Statistical Commission, while the Expert Group's report was for information, several countries took the opportunity to provide written statements in response to the Expert Group's report. These written statements illustrate how several countries have begun to implement and operationalise the GSGF while denoting the need to strengthen capabilities and capacities in the area of integrating statistical and geospatial information.

III. Progress Against the Work Plan 2020 – 2022

A. General Promotion Activities

6. In the intersessional period, the Expert Group has worked diligently to execute its work plan 2020 – 2022. To complement its substantive work, the Expert Group has taken advantage of several opportunities to strengthen the promotion, awareness-raising and implementation efforts of the GSGF at various fora. These include the European Forum for Geography and Statistics; a Virtual Expert Group meeting on the theme "Access versus privacy: the special case of population data" convened by the United Nations Population Fund in partnership with Ghana, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; and, the Expert Group meeting on the United Nations Demographic Yearbook system.

7. In the Americas, the Marco Estadístico y Geoespacial para las Américas[1] (MEGA) project aims to facilitate regional integration of statistical and geospatial information through common standards and geographies. Further, within the Americas, the "Central America Project" provides technical assistance[2] to countries, these include Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Moreover, one of the key outputs of the Central American Project is an e-learning platform that provides an interactive tool to enable countries to understand the GSGF's value, application, infrastructure, and implementation requirements. This e-learning platform is currently under development and should be released during the coming intersessional period.

8. In Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's High-Level Group on the Modernisation of Official Statistics[3] (HLG-MOS), which includes members of the Expert Group, has developed the Geospatial View of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model[4] (GeoGSBPM). The GeoGSBPM helps embed the GSGF, its five principles and key elements within the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM)[5].

9. The Expert Group is also appreciative of work being undertaken by countries to translate the GSGF. In the intersessional period, the GSGF has been translated into Chinese, by China; French, by Canada; and Spanish by Colombia, Mexico, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. These translations are now available on the Secretariat's website[6].

B. Current Status of the Work Plan 2020 – 2022

10. In line with its work plan, the Expert Group formed three task teams: Capacity Building; Privacy and Confidentiality; and, Principles of the GSGF (composed of three work streams on Geocoding, Common Geographies and Interoperability). Since their formation, each of the task teams and work streams has convened virtual meetings, under the leadership of either its leads or the co-Chairs of the Expert Group. The Expert Group urges and welcomes the participation of additional Member States in these important fora.

1 http://www.un-ggim-americas.org/mega/

2 The Central American Project is led by the Committee of Expert's Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Americas, financed by the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), with the national geospatial information agency of Spain, the National Centre for Geographic Information (CNIG),

3 The Geospatial Task Team under HLG-MOS' Supporting Standards Group

4 https://statswiki.unece.org/display/GSBPM/GeoGSBPM

5 The GSBPM is the standard framework agreed by the Conference of European Statisticians and to help NSOs modernise their statistical production processes, through a set of activities needed to produce official statistics.

6 http://ggim.un.org/UN-GGIM-publications/

Task Team on Capacity Building

11. The task team on Capacity Building, led by Norway and Sweden, aims to develop guidance regarding the implementation and strengthening of statistical-geospatial capacity through fostering the coordination of capacity building activities. During the intersessional period, the Task Team developed and launched the 'Global survey on preparedness on the implementation of the GSGF', which is discussed in detail in Section IV.

Task Team on Privacy and Confidentiality

12. The task team on Privacy and Confidentiality, led by France, aims to provide guidance and recommendations for the management of privacy and confidentiality issues when sharing or releasing geospatial data within NSOs. During the intersessional period, the team identified the issues relevant to Privacy and Confidentiality through organising and collating existing material and literature.

13. The initial outcomes of this research enabled the Task Team to develop "Section E: Management of privacy and confidentiality issues when using, sharing or releasing geospatial data" of the Global Survey. The responses to the Global Survey will help the task team, and the Expert Group establish an understanding of the specific issues when using geospatial information in the management of confidentiality. Initial analysis of these results indicates that most countries are aware of the privacy and confidentiality issues inherent when using geospatial information during the statistical production process but lack the means to deal with it effectively. Further, close to a third of responses indicating an "urgent need" for capacity building in this area.

Task Team on the Principles of the GSGF

14. The task team on the Principles of the GSGF is composed of three work streams, each aimed to support the development of guidance to support the operationalisation and implementation of the GSGF:

(a) **The work stream on Geocoding**, led by the United States of America, aims to review options for geocoding, and develop guidance to enable the geocoding of statistical data. In the intersessional period, the work stream completed the scoping paper into the working draft of the GSGF Implementation Guide submitted as a background document to this present report; which aims to provide practical guidance on how to implement Principles 1 and 2 of the GSGF.

(b) **The work stream on Common Geographies**, led by Canada and Eurostat, aims to review options for common geographies and to develop guidance and recommendation for common geographies, Principle 3 of the GSGF. During the intersessional period, the work stream advanced its scoping paper on "The Global Statistical Geospatial Framework: Implementing Common Geographies". This incorporated revisions from insights emanating from a short questionnaire circulated to the Expert Group to inform how common geographies are used at the national level and the initial responses emanating from Global Survey. The work stream's future work will include: refining the definition of common geographies based on the responses to the Global Survey; refining the developed implementation guidance on common geographies; and, highlighting country-level use cases of common geographies.

(c) **The work stream on Interoperability**, led by the United Kingdom, aims to provide guidance to Member States that enables them to benefit from the continuing development of key statistical standards and processes from both the

global geospatial information and statistical communities. In the intersessional period, the work stream developed the "Fostering Interoperability" section of the GSGF Implementation Guide and refined "The Terminology of the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information", to support countries with implementing Principle 4 of the GSGF. The work stream also provided substantive input to the Statistical community's development of the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) 3.0 standard, to incorporate geospatial information for the first time within the standard. As of the eleventh session, this standard is currently under public review.

IV. Outcomes of the Global Survey on Diagnosing Readiness to Implement the GSGF

15. In its decision 10/106, the Committee of Experts urged Member States to continue efforts towards the adoption and implementation of the GSGF and to support institutional coordination and collaboration between national statistical offices, national geospatial information agencies and other relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing implementation of the Framework, especially in the context of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. To respond directly to this decision, the Expert Group developed the "Global survey to diagnose readiness at the country level for implementing the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework". The Global Survey was subsequently disseminated to national organisations and agencies responsible for statistical data and geospatial information.

16. The Global Survey was launched in the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) through its reporting to the fifty-second Statistical Commission in March 2021. The Global Survey was disseminated electronically to Member States' National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and National Geospatial Information Agencies (NGIAs) through the UN-GGIM regional committees, UN regional commissions, and other relevant regional organs. As of 1 July 2021, the Global Survey has received responses from 77 Member States, identified in Annex 1 of this present report.

17. The Global Survey consisted of 27 questions, structured into six thematic sections:

(a) Section A, "Respondent and contact information", requested information to contextualise the ensuing results;

(b) Section B, "Awareness of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework and Integrated Geospatial Information Framework", collected respondent awareness of the GSGF and the IGIF among NSOs, NGIAs and other public bodies in Member States. Respondents were also requested to assess the applicability of existing global frameworks to facilitate the integration of statistical and geospatial information;

(c) Section C, "Current situation and practice in Member States", captured information on how the integration of statistical and geospatial information is conducted within the national context. Specifically, the questions in this section aimed to capture information on several issues, including the state of institutional collaboration, prevailing access to data, and the ongoing institutional arrangements that facilitate integration activities;

(d) Section D, "Guidance and capacity development for statistical-geospatial integration", aimed to understand the deeper needs of implementation guidance and capacity building. Respondents were requested to assess and prioritise areas for effective implementation guidance and to express areas requiring further development and training to build the capacity needed to implement the GSGF;

(e) Section E, "Management of privacy and confidentiality issues when using, sharing or releasing geospatial data", focused on reviewing the privacy and

confidentiality issues when using, sharing or releasing geospatially enabled statistical data, developed in collaboration with the Expert Group's task team on Privacy and Confidentiality; and,

(f) Section F, "Comments and input from respondents", provided respondents with the ability to input further information.

18. Preliminary results from the Global Survey are discussed within a background document to this present report. While approximately 40% of Member States (78 of 193) contributed responses to the Global Survey, there were significant regional differences in the response: Europe (61% of the regional membership), Americas (61%), Arab-States (32%), Asia and the Pacific (29%), and Africa (10%). Further, several countries started the survey, but did not complete it. The Expert Group intended for the Global Survey to be open for responses from March 2021 to June 2021. However, in light of the imbalance in these responses, the Expert Group has decided to keep the Global Survey open through November 2021 and report the final results to the Statistical Commission at its fifty-third session in March 2022. The Expert Group urges Member States who have not yet done so to contribute their national perspective[7].

V. The GSGF Implementation Guide

19. In its decision 10/106, the Committee of Experts requested the Expert Group to continue the development of key statistical standards and processes that would strengthen the integration of statistical and geospatial information, to provide practical guidance in the production and use of integrated geospatial information, and to develop the interlinkages between the GSGF and the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) to further support the implementation and operationalisation of both Frameworks, including through the UN regional commissions and the UN-GGIM regional committees. To respond directly to this decision, the Expert Group, through its Task Teams, has drafted extensive guidance to assist Member States with the practical implementation of the GSGF, the draft guidance "The Global Statistical Geospatial Framework: Implementation Guide" is provided to the Committee as a background document, as an initial draft for its consideration.

20. The GSGF: Implementation Guide aims to identify methodologies, techniques and approaches to practically implement the GSGF, segmented into five sections:

(a) **Implementing Geocoding**. This section provides guidance to assist Member States to achieve the objective stated in the GSGF that "all statistical unit records should include or be linked to a precise geographic reference (an x- and y-coordinate), and if not, the smallest geographic area possible". In-line with Principles 1 and 2 of the GSGF, the guidance also highlights the importance of the Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes as a key enabler for identifying available data within the national ecosystem for geocoding statistical unit records. The content of this section was also socialised as a background document[8] to the Statistical Commission at its fifty-second session in March 2021.

(b) **Implementing Common Geographies**. This section provides guidance towards establishing an agreed set of geographic areas "Common Geographies" for the display, storage, reporting, and analysis of social, economic and environmental comparisons across statistical datasets from different sources. In line with Principle 3 of the GSGF, these Common Geographies enable the production and

[7] The Global Survey on Diagnosing Readiness to Implement the GSGF https://surveys.enalyzer.com/survey/linkindex?pid=rmad4d28

[8] Under Agenda Item 4(j) https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/documents/BG-4j-EG-ISGI_Scoping_Paper-on_Geocoding-E.pdf

dissemination of integrated statistics and geospatial information within a country to support informed decision-making.

(c) **Fostering Interoperability**. This section highlights resources and approaches that enable countries to work towards the implementation of Principle 4 of the GSGF through the four dimensions of interoperability as defined by the GSGF – Legal, Organisational, Semantic, and Technical. The Expert Group intends to develop this section further in the coming intersessional period.

(d) **Ensuring Privacy and Confidentiality**. This section looks towards the establishment of guidelines and recommendations with which to address privacy and confidentiality issues emerging from the use of geospatially enabled statistical data. Guided by Principles 2 and 5 of the GSGF, this section aims to summarise relevant academic literature and the prevailing good practices provided by the Expert Group.

(e) **The Terminology of the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information**. This section collates an initial set of definitions of key concepts to help share knowledge of existing terminologies and practices and align the description of concepts to reach a common understanding among representatives of statistical and geospatial communities.

21. With the exception of its section on the Terminology of the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, the draft guidance is structured to help the reader understand the importance of each topic, identifies the relevant principles of the GSGF that the guide aims to operationalise, and highlights further reading and associated resources.

22. In providing resources to support countries with implementing the GSGF, enabling them to produce geospatially enabled statistical data for local through national to global decision-making, the Expert Group notes the utility of the other resources developed under the purview of the Committee of Experts. These resources include the IGIF and the Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes, as key resources that provide the enabling environment that allows for the implementation of the GSGF. In this regard, the Expert Group is cognisant that the interlinkages between the IGIF and the GSGF, particularly how this guidance relates to the IGIF's Strategic Pathway 4: Data, could be strengthened further. Accordingly, to formalise the draft GSGF Implementation Guide, the Expert Group intends to elaborate its it further to contextualise its guidance with respect to the IGIF generally, and Strategic Pathway 4: Data, specifically. Accordingly, the Expert Group invites the participation of the Committee to ensure the ensuing guidance is applicable and relevant. Further, as part of consolidating its work, the Expert Group aims to highlight the interlinkages between the National and Regional Experiences of Implementing the GSGF and this guidance to further add to the rich resources already available to guide Member States to implement and operationalise the GSGF.

VI. National and Regional Experiences of Implementing the GSGF

23. In its decision 10/106, the Committee of Experts welcomed the many instances in which the GSGF had been implemented in Member States and the increased focus on the exchange of knowledge and capacity-building, and suggested that the Expert Group collect national experiences relating to the integration of statistical and geospatial information to further guide Member States in its implementation and operationalisation. To respond directly to this mandate, the Expert Group requested Member States and Regions to provide case studies and good practices of how they are implementing and operationalising the GSGF to create geospatially enabled statistical data, which are consolidated in the background document "National and Regional Experiences of Implementing the GSGF".

24. Members of the Expert Group, both Member States and regional commissions were invited to submit how the GSGF has been implemented and operationalised along three main lines of inquiry:

(a) **The Overall Implementation of the GSGF**

(b) **The Implementation of the Principles of the GSGF**

Elaborated by the GSGF's five principles, one submission per principle.

(c) **Your National Response to COVID-19**

How has the GSGF supported your national response to COVID-19?

How could the GSGF have supported your national response to COVID-19 if it had been implemented? What were/are the barriers to its implementation?

25. 24 Member States, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Senegal, South Africa and Uruguay provided their national experiences, representing contributions of how the GSGF is implemented within, and by, NSOs, NGIAs individually and also collaboratively. Complementing these contributions from Member States are case studies from the Americas (provided by UN-GGIM: Americas and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and Africa (provided by UN-GGIM: Africa and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa).

26. A common thread running through the contributions from the Expert Group's members to this resource is the importance of resources to assist in the implementation and operationalisation of the GSGF. The Expert Group is hopeful that the guidance accompanying this report can further help countries bridge the gaps that they have identified. Furthermore, from the initial findings of the Global Survey and the collation of these experiences, it is clear that the GSGF is implemented in varying degrees. Some countries have embraced the GSGF fully, including formalising task teams to work across NSOs and NGIAs to deepen the collaboration between national statistical and geospatial information stakeholders; others mention that they have not adopted the GSGF but see similarities and alignment of their national practices to the GSGF.

27. Alongside the results of the Global Survey, the initial analysis of the National and Regional Experiences highlights how the differing contexts in which the GSGF has been implemented and operationalised and conversely indicates the differing levels of maturity in which the GSGF is implemented. Investigating the concept of maturity vis-à-vis the GSGF, its implementation, and conducting further analysis of these contributions is a topic that will be considered by the Expert Group, specifically its Task Team on Capacity Building during the intersessional period.

28. Further, the Expert Group is cognisant of the geographic distribution of contributing members to this guidance and urges the Committee of Expert's members, especially those in Africa, Arab States, and Asia and the Pacific, to contribute their experiences of how they have implemented the GSGF, regardless of membership status to the Expert Group.

VII. The Role of Integrated Statistical and Geospatial Information for COVID-19

29. The report of the Expert Group[9] to the Statistical Commission in March 2021 examined in detail its response so far to COVID-19, emphasising the role of integrated statistical and geospatial information in coordinating a national response to the pandemic. In this, the GSGF offers both NSOs and NGIAs a framework to establish and strengthen coordination and cooperation in producing geospatially enabled statistical data. Further, the discussion within the report noted that the emergence of COVID-19 had reaffirmed that the priorities and activities detailed within the workplan of the Expert Group were relevant to the immediate need of COVID-19, overarching national development priorities, and global agendas.

30. In that light and notwithstanding the immense pressure placed upon its members to support national efforts in integrating statistical and geospatial information, the Expert Group has worked diligently to compile the resources accompanying this present report. Within its background documents, several countries have noted that the implementation of the GSGF contributed to having more improved availability of geospatially enabled statistical data that are able to be disaggregated by geographic location and available across the national data ecosystem, including health agencies. Further, some countries also observed that had the GSGF been implemented, the availability of geospatially enabled statistical data would have improved national decision-making.

VIII. Contributing to the 2030 Agenda and the 2020 Round of Population Censuses

31. Notwithstanding the current global challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, some Member States are proceeding with their national population censuses as planned. As evidenced by the collated experiences of the GSGF's implementation, the GSGF is acting as intended in supporting countries to integrate statistical and geospatial information in countries which sought to implement it. The GSGF simultaneously helps with the production of geospatially integrated statistical data for the 2020 Round of Population Censuses, and in its dissemination. As much of the initial data needs for the 2030 Agenda will be drawn from the 2020 Round of Population Census, countries have an opportunity through implementing the GSGF, to ensure the reusability of the data emanating from their Censuses to meet their national development priorities and the needs of global development agendas.

32. Still, it is an irrefutable fact that COVID-19 has irrevocably changed our world, especially as countries adapt to the 'new normal'. Regardless of where we collectively stand now, geospatially enabled statistical data is at the forefront of informed decision making, not just in responding to COVID-19.

33. Participants of the first United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress, convened in Deqing, China, in November 2018, issued the Moganshan Declaration[10]. The Declaration, *inter alia,* affirmed that geospatial technologies and innovation have been unequally adopted and that there is an urgent need to effectively bridge the geospatial digital divide. The responses from Member States have highlighted the gaps that exist in the area of integrating statistical and geospatial information are wide and including the variable response rate of the Global Survey, this gap is deeper in certain areas than others. Ultimately, this only serves to underscore that to leave no one behind; we must reach those furthest behind first.

[9] E/CN.3/2021/27 https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/documents/2021-27-GeoInfo-E.pdf
[10] http://ggim.un.org/unwgic/documents/moganshan_declaration_draft_final.pdf

34. Accordingly, the Expert Group strongly urges Member States of the Committee of Experts to adopt the GSGF to foster and deepen the existing interlinkages between national statistical and geospatial communities. The need for accessible and usable geospatially enabled statistical data has been well articulated by the 2030 Agenda and the 2020 round of population censuses, a need amplified by the integrated data demands of COVID-19.

IX. Virtual Meetings of the Expert Group and its Ongoing Modalities

35. In light of the ongoing global impact of COVID-19, the Expert Group has been conducting quarterly (approximately) virtual meetings. Alongside these regular virtual meetings, ad-hoc meetings have been convened to support the work of the Expert Group, including meetings between the co-Chairs and the Secretariat, with its task teams and work streams convening virtual meetings as appropriate.

36. On 8 April 2021 the Expert Group convened a meeting between the co-Chairs, the leads of its Task Teams and Work Streams, and regional focal points. Specifically, regional focal points included representatives from each of UN-GGIM's regional committees, but also relevant regional stakeholders, including UN regional commissions. A key outcome of this meeting was the agreement to deliver the Global Survey through to the relevant national focal points, through this newly established mechanism. The Expert Group intends to convene meetings with the regional focal points on a bi-annual basis, to help further strengthen coordination and coherence between the Expert Group and regional focal points in the area of statistical and geospatial integration.

37. As the Expert Group works towards completing its work plan 2020 – 2022, it has a clear path forward to finalise the GSGF Implementation Guide while responding to the mandates of both the Committee of Experts and the Statistical Commission. In the coming intersessional period, the Expert Group is cognisant of the need to develop a new work plan 2022 – 2024, based on the needs and guidance of both of its reporting bodies.

X. Conclusion and the way forward

38. As the Expert Group advances to complete its Work Plan 2020 – 2022, it is cognisant that the world has significantly changed since its sixth meeting. While the demands for geospatially enabled statistical data vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda and the 2020 Round of Population Censuses are as strong as ever, the emergence of COVID-19 has taken the need for this data to another level entirely. In urging countries to implement and operationalise the GSGF as a tool for attaining geospatially enabled statistical data for the 2030 Agenda and the 2020 Round of Population Censuses, the Expert Group urges countries to consider the broader benefits emanating from the availability of high-quality, timely, and reliable geospatially enabled statistical data for other national development priorities, such as the response to COVID-19.

39. Through the efforts of the Expert Group, the Committee of Experts is continuing to work with the Statistical Commission to help strengthen the interlinkages between the two professional communities. As an example, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021[11] calls for "innovative methods such as the integration of [statistical] and geospatial information". The Expert Group finds itself uniquely placed to assist the Statistical community with adopting the relevant innovative methods and supporting their mainstreaming. As the primary guiding

[11] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2021.pdf

framework for both communities to integrate statistical and geospatial information, the GSGF is the practical mechanism that is the bridge between these two communities. The Expert Group now wishes to more fully investigate opportunities that arise when helping the geospatial community 'cross the bridge' and further enfranchise the complementary work of the Committee of Experts, such as the IGIF, within the statistical community.

40. Developing the interlinkages between the GSGF and the IGIF is a first step towards further strengthening this bridge, with future steps potentially promoting the work of the Standards Development Organisations (such as their work on refining the Guide to the Role of Standards in Geospatial Information Management and its Companion document on Standards Recommendations by Tier Introduction) or the Committee's work on developing the Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes. As the statistical community looks to investigate incorporating novel forms of data, inclusive of geospatial information, Earth observations and other forms of big-data, the global geospatial information community finds itself uniquely placed to help its sister community realise the benefits that geospatial information can bring to the global statistical process, NSOs, and the national statistical system. Accordingly, while the Expert Group looks to use the forthcoming months to finalise its resources to support the implementation and operationalisation of the GSGF, the Expert Group will also need to develop a new Work Plan, in cognisance of this opportunity and welcomes the guidance of the Committee in this regard.

41. To further accelerate and leverage any available capacity and resources, the Expert Group invites the participation of more Member States in its ongoing and upcoming work. Through supporting the implementation of the GSGF at the national and regional levels, a globally consistent mechanism for enabling the integration of statistical and geospatial information is realised. In turn, this can support national development priorities and regional and global initiatives, strengthening the attainment of the 2020 round of population censuses and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

XI. Points for Discussion

42. The Committee of Experts is invited to:

(a) Take note of this present report, express its views on the Expert Group's progress, and provide its guidance regarding the Expert Group's future work;

(b) Continue to urge Member States to adopt and implement the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, especially given the added dimensions of COVID-19, and other emergent concerns necessitating the integration of geospatial, statistical and other related information;

(c) Express its views and provide guidance on the background documents: the GSGF Implementation Guide; the collation of national and regional experiences of the GSGF's implementation; and the initial outcomes of the global survey to diagnose readiness at the country level for implementing the GSGF; and,

(d) Consider and recommend options available to Member States and partners to actively support the work of the Expert Group, particularly through participation and resources.

XII. Annex 1: Member States responding to the Global Survey on Readiness to Implement the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework

Member States

1. Algeria
2. Antigua and Barbuda
3. Argentina
4. Armenia
5. Australia
6. Austria
7. Barbados
8. Belarus
9. Belgium
10. Bhutan
11. Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
12. Brazil
13. Canada
14. Chile
15. Colombia
16. Costa Rica
17. Côte d'Ivoire
18. Croatia
19. Cuba
20. Cyprus
21. Denmark
22. Dominican Republic
23. Ecuador
24. Estonia
25. Finland
26. France
27. Germany
28. Greece
29. Guatemala
30. Honduras
31. Hungary
32. India
33. Indonesia
34. Iran (the Islamic Republic of)
35. Ireland
36. Israel
37. Italy
38. Jamaica
39. Japan
40. Jordan
41. Kuwait
42. Kyrgyzstan
43. Latvia
44. Lebanon
45. Lithuania
46. Malta
47. Mexico
48. Namibia
49. Netherlands
50. Nigeria
51. North Macedonia
52. Norway
53. Panama
54. Paraguay
55. Peru
56. Philippines
57. Poland
58. Portugal
59. Qatar
60. Republic of Korea
61. Republic of Moldova
62. Russian Federation
63. Saint Lucia
64. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
65. Serbia
66. Singapore
67. Slovenia
68. Sri Lanka
69. Sweden
70. Switzerland
71. Tonga
72. Turkey
73. Uganda
74. United Arab Emirates
75. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
76. Uruguay

Non-Member States

77. State of Palestine

Associate Members of their Regional Commission

78. Montserrat