

Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Eleventh session

New York, 23, 24 and 27 August 2021

Item 3 of the agenda

Strengthening of geospatial information management (for discussion and decision)

Statement provided by:

International Cartographic Association (ICA), a member of the Geospatial Societies Thematic Group

Statement:

The ICA acknowledges, recognizes, and appreciates the many efforts of the Secretariat in responding to the goals set by the Committee of Experts to strengthen geospatial information management. In response to current and future demands, to be successful and sustainable, the Secretariat is in need of additional stable resources to effectively guide and support Member States in their country-led and country-owned efforts at building and maintaining integrated geospatial information capabilities. This level of support should be comparable to the organizational structure for supporting statistics. These capabilities are crucial for Member States to adequately address national and global challenges such as meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and immediately responding to climate change as indicated in the recent UN report. Lack of sufficient resources jeopardizes the timeliness and sustainability of the Committee's work. For example, Member States need and are using a draft version of Part 2 of the IGIF Implementation Guide that does not include the results of the global consultation initiated last year. The inability of the Secretariat to deliver a final version in time for the 11th Session reflects a classic resource challenge based on an economy of scale – too many high-priority tasks for too few people. Without sufficient minimal constant resources, the base program of the Committee is in danger of failure.

Background: At its inception in 2011, the Committee of Experts was established intentionally without resources. This limiting factor was imposed as a “wait and see” condition to allow the Committee to formulate a vision and initial program. There was a recognized need for establishing and improving geospatial information management for Member States, with a particular focus on developing countries. The Committee began in earnest and identified specific topics to help Member States in their management of geospatial information, such as the identification of fundamental data themes so that Member States had a common approach for use in a global and regional context and determining how to better integrate statistical and geospatial information. This work preceded the present challenges faced by Member States in addressing the many diverse indicators of the SDGs.

As the meaningful and applicable work of the Committee expanded during each of its 10-years, no resources were authorized for the Secretariat. With the Committee's new flagship program of the IGIF that is so critical to Member States in addressing their national priorities and responding to their national circumstances, to expect that the Secretariat can continue in its current “no-resources” mode is untenable. The current approach violates “Strategic Pathway 3: Financial” of the IGIF.

Recommendation: Establish a short-term working group to develop a proposed organizational structure and a financial plan for the Secretariat that includes an annual budget estimate for staffing resources and anticipated expenses in addition to staffing and budget estimates for each of the next five years. Upon the GGIM Bureau's approval, submit the financial plan to the Department of Social and Economic Affairs with concurrence from the ECOSOC for their review and action. Once initiated, the financial plan will be included in Item 15 (Program Management Report) in time for the 12th Session of UN-GGIM.

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