

Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

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Contribution of regional committees and thematic groups to
the global geospatial information agenda



United Nations Geospatial Network of the
Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

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Introduction

1. At its tenth session, convened virtually on 26-27 August and 4 September 2020, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 10/102 (d), in which it commended the United Nations Geospatial Network (hereafter, “the Network”), for its extensive work on the preparation and completion of the document entitled “[Blueprint, Geospatial for a Better World: Transforming the Lives of People, Places and Planet¹](#)” and its companion document “[Blueprint: Geospatial Landscape of the United Nations system²](#)”, developed in close collaboration with the United Nations system, and which reviewed the current status of the geospatial landscape in the United Nations and the strategic design and activities that will guide the future work and activities of the Network.

2. During the intersessional period, the Network met monthly to continue towards implementing its agreed [Work Plan 2019-2021³](#), presented during the Ninth Session of the Committee of Experts, and aligned with the priorities and activities from its “Blueprint”. The present report reviews the Network’s activities in the intersessional period, focusing on its actions to complete the priority activities included in its Work Plan 2019-2021 and its Blueprint.

Building and growing the Network

3. As part of its ongoing efforts to reach out to all entities of the United Nations system and invite all entities to join and engage in the Network activities, the participating entities of the United Nations system grew 37 represented entities. In the intersessional period, to collect and assess further the capacities and activities of its constituting entities, the Network prepared an inventory form sent to all its representatives. The result is the establishment of an internal resource that tracks relevant activities of Network members, maintaining details of designated representatives and alternate representatives, further developing the geospatial landscape as initially detailed in its Landscape document.

4. To take stock of the geospatial community across the United Nations system, the Network’s Secretariat undertook a United Nations system-wide survey. Whilst the main composition of the Network is the senior-most professionals within the United Nations system; the Network is cognisant of the broad community-of-practice that can be further strengthened. Accordingly, the Network is taking action to develop a system-wide database consisting of details on the geospatial experts in the United Nations system, including name, gender, area of specialization, professional rank, entity and email, sent to all known geospatial professionals. The survey started in July 2021 and will run until the end of August 2021 to ensure the maximum response possible to the survey.

5. Further, to better reflect the geospatial expertise and develop career progression within the United Nations system, the Network took action to provide guidance on generic job titles and duties for the United Nations system through the preparation of generic job descriptions for geospatial professionals. Guided by the activities of the Blueprint and the Network’s work programme, the generic job description profiles were established and consolidated using a wide array of references from Member States, geospatial societies, private sector, and heterogeneous profiles from the United Nations system. The generic job profiles were reviewed by the Office for Human Resources Management of the United Nations Secretariat. The Network met throughout the year to review and adjust the [generic job profile available⁴](#) as part of this background report.

Partnerships and Communication

6. The Network has conducted several partnership collaboration meetings, with the three other Thematic Networks of UN GGIM (Academic Network, Geospatial Societies, and the Private Sector Network), as well as with other networks of the United Nations system (e.g., the Digital Technologies Network) to align its collaboration activities, set several priority actions for future collaboration and establish areas for synergies in the geospatial arena. Further, inspired by the work of the UN-GGIM and Statistical Commission, realized by the [Global Statistical and Geospatial Framework⁵](#), the Network organized a four-day online [workshop⁶](#) organized jointly with the Coordination

¹ https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/10th-Session/documents/2020_UN-Geospatial-Network-Blueprint.pdf

² https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/10th-Session/documents/2020_UN-Geospatial-Network-Blueprint-Landscape.pdf

³ <https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/9th-Session/documents/UN-Geospatial-Network-Report-30July2019.pdf>

⁴ https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/11th-Session/documents/2021_UNGeospatialNetwork_genericjobprofilesGeospatial.pdf

⁵ https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/9th-Session/documents/The_GSGF.pdf

⁶ https://www.un.org/geospatialnetwork/sites/www.un.org.geospatialnetwork/files/20210712_ungn-ccsa_joint_workshop_report.pdf

Committee on Statistical Activities ([CCSA](#)⁷) on geospatial and statistics integration in the United Nations system and for Member States.

7. As part of its external communication objectives to have an external web-based platform for the United Nations System, the Network deployed its newly established [website](#)⁸ in the six official languages of the United Nations to raise awareness on the role of the Network and, by extension UN-GGIM.

8. To further inform and document its activities, the Network collated and formatted demonstration projects forms, to be soon available via its website. The demonstration projects were also the basis for the two substantive publications of the Network, demonstrating the depth and breadth of geospatial activities of the United Nations system. The two publications entitled “[Geospatial in Action – Data and Insights for the Sustainable Development Goals](#)”⁹ and “[Geospatial for Humanity: Prevention, Response and Recovery on the World COVID-19 Pandemic](#)”¹⁰ provide detailed information, case studies, and good practices on the use, and relevance of, geospatial information management in support of the mandates of the Organization, and are available as part of this background report.

Composition of the new leadership and way forward

9. At its third plenary, held virtually on 16 July 2021., the Network renewed the composition of its Steering Group:

Chair – United Nations Environment Programme (Mr. Alexandre Caldas);

Vice-Chairs – United Nations Children’s Fund (Mr. Toby Wicks) and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (Mr. Einar Bjørge); and

Members – International Telecommunication Union; Food and Agriculture Organization; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; United Nations Population Fund, International Office for Migration; United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime; World Food Programme; and, the Secretariat.

10. With the succession of leadership in some roles and the continuance in others, the Network’s Steering Group has reiterated its strategic priorities in the forthcoming biennial 2021 - 2023 period. These priorities align with the strategic intent articulated within its Blueprint, as noted by UN-GGIM. These priorities relate to governance, technology and people as overarching governance, the development of the “United Nations Geospatial Network Hub”, and the strengthening of the Networks’ relationship with Member States and other Networks, both the thematic Networks of UN-GGIM and others within the United Nations system.

11. However, the Network is cognizant of the need to refine and adapt its strategic direction based on the external needs of Member States and of the Network’s members. Accordingly, as part of its upcoming priorities, the Network also decided to establish a dedicated task team that investigates the nexus of geospatial information and health, prompted by the ongoing novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. This task team will aim to address issues of cooperation and governance in that domain.

12. Further, as a direct response to the Blueprint’s consideration to ensure the Network anchors itself within the United Nations system, the Network is now represented as a Member of the Data Governance Group of the [Secretary-General’s Data Strategy](#)¹¹, through its Chair.

13. In summary, the Network fully aims to strengthen and enable the United Nations to better use geospatial information for the delivery of its mandates in its Peace, Development and Human Rights pillars. The Network is cognizant of the importance of the need to create synergies with all governments, academia, private sector, societies, innovators, and civil society at large and stands ready to ‘play its part’ in the service of UN-GGIM’s overarching mandates. This is of fundamental importance in showing how the United Nations system can realise the aspirational statement of the “Geospatial way for a better world” by leveraging geospatial information to transform the lives of People, Places and our Planet.

⁷ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/>

⁸ <http://www.un.org/geospatialnetwork>

⁹ https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/11th-Session/documents/2021_UNGeospatialNetwork_GeospatialInAction.pdf

¹⁰ https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/11th-Session/documents/2021_UNGeospatialNetwork_GeospatialForHumanity.pdf

¹¹ https://www.un.org/en/content/datastrategy/images/pdf/UN_SG_Data-Strategy.pdf