
Economic and Social Council

18 July 2022

Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management Twelfth session

New York, 3 – 5 August 2022

Item 5 of the provisional agenda *

Contribution of regional committees to the global geospatial information agenda

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the contributions of the five United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees to the global geospatial information agenda for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its eleventh session, held virtually on 23, 24 and 27 August 2021, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 11/102, in which it congratulated the five United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees on their work and achievements during the intersessional period, including their response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Committee urged for concerted efforts in the strengthening, coordination and coherence of geospatial information management, including the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, among the regional committees.

In this present report, information is provided on the intersessional activities and achievements of the following five regional committees: the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa; the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Americas; the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Arab States; the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific; and the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Europe.

The report includes an overview of the organizational structure of the regional committees, the composition of their Bureaux and the appointment of Executive Board members, and their working arrangements, which facilitate the conduct of their activities, work programmes and interaction with members at the national, regional and global levels. The report also contains the proposed dates of the next plenary meetings of the regional committees.

* E/C.20/2022/1.

The report covers the main subjects addressed by each of the regional committees and their working groups at their most recent annual plenary meeting. In the table below, the main work areas and activities conducted during the intersessional period by each regional committee are outlined.

<i>Regional committee</i>	<i>Work areas and activities</i>
Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus building: organization of regional meetings and a workshop on geospatial value and integration • Knowledge generation: development of the African Geospatial Development Index; creation of a space-time cube for analyzing community mobility patterns in Africa; preparation of a report on assessing availability of fundamental geospatial data sets for the Sustainable Development Goals • Capacity development: development of e-learning course on geospatial governance and policy development for French-speaking countries
Americas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplan 2021–2025 and Strategic Vision • Working groups, their realignment and work: global statistical and geospatial framework, strategic framework for geospatial information and services for disasters, geodetic reference frame for the Americas, and Integrated Geospatial Information Framework • Regional collaboration: joint plan of action to implement the Aguascalientes Declaration, the Digital Earth Americas project, the Caribbean Geospatial Development Initiative, the Chile-Mexico project, the statistical and geospatial information integration project in Central America, and volunteered geographic information • Work and achievements of the Academic Network and the Private Sector Network • New role of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean as the regional committee’s technical secretariat

<i>Regional committee</i>	<i>Work areas and activities</i>
Arab States	<p>Working group activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Geospatial Information Framework: workshops featuring strategic pathways on governance and institutions and on capacity and education • Fundamental geospatial data and geostandards: three virtual workshops on geospatial data systems, geospatial portals and advanced level geoportal development • Global geodetic reference frame: two virtual workshops addressing challenges and finding solutions to support the Region's geodetic work and the preparation of an action plan • Integration of geospatial and statistical information: three virtual workshops on learning from country experiences of conducting 2020 censuses in the light of the pandemic and the integration between work partners
Asia and the Pacific	<p>Through their working groups, the following work areas are being supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geodetic data-sharing and technical capacity development to address global issues such as sea-level change and disaster risk reduction • Strengthening human capacity-building and developing capacity-building programmes related to cadastre and land management in order to incorporate professionals, future young professionals and vulnerable groups and reflect a gender balance • Knowledge exchange within member countries through more technical activities and the development of a geospatial information statistics integration platform
Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New strategy and workplan to match the needs of the region based on three pillars: sharing knowledge, raising awareness and strategic leadership • Workplan focused on five key priority areas: the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the geodetic reference frame, data integration, the Sustainable Development Goals, and data strategy and policy • Collaboration between national mapping and cadastral authorities and national statistical institutes in the European Region, along with European institutions and observer bodies

Also contained in the report are the main decisions adopted at the plenary meetings of the regional committees and information on the actions taken to ensure that their work programmes are in alignment with the global geospatial information agenda, in particular the implementation of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and the integration of statistical and geospatial information.

The report also provides an overview of the major challenges faced by the regional committees and the strategies and programmes planned or adopted to address them. The regional committees have identified the adoption and effective implementation of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework as a priority activity for the future and in support of sustainable development.

I. Introduction

1. At its eleventh session, held virtually on 23, 24 and 27 August 2021, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 11/102, in which it congratulated the five United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) regional committees on their work and achievements during the intersessional period, including their response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Committee urged for concerted efforts in the strengthening, coordination, and coherence of geospatial information management, including the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), among the regional committees. Notably, the Committee expressed its appreciation that the five regional committees convened their plenary meetings in hybrid or virtual modes, and also in conjunction with other geospatial and related technology events, from November 2021 to February 2022.

2. Each UN-GGIM regional committee plays a vital role liaising with the UN-GGIM Secretariat on topics of interest and major developments between meetings of the Committee of Experts, facilitating regional development and discussion, and formally feeding into the work of the Committee of Experts. All regional committees provide a mechanism for a strong and streamlined regional infrastructure that brings important regional perspectives to the global level and for the outcomes and benefits of the global activities to be disseminated to all Member States in each region. The regional committees are pivotal bodies within the UN-GGIM architecture, as they directly interface with Member States and know and understand their geospatial information management requirements and support the implementation of fit for purpose solutions.

3. For this reporting period, the representatives of the regional committees continued to successfully deliver on their regional and global geospatial information management work programmes. The achievements of regional committees demonstrate their resilience and adaptation to the impacts of economic, social and environmental challenges resulting from the pandemic related restrictions. Following up on last year's report, there has been a continued upsurge in, and strengthening of, coordination and coherence in geospatial collaborative activities across UN-GGIM regional committees. Regional committees also continued to prioritize the adoption and effective implementation of the IGIF, with emphasis on the preparation of Country-level Action Plans.

4. This present report highlights the main achievements of the five regional committees of the Committee of Experts, including their regional plenary meetings, capacity-building initiatives, and actions taken to support Member States over the reporting period. The reports of all regional committees are provided as background documents to this present report. Notably UN-GGIM Europe has tabled two additional background documents, the UN-GGIM Europe Strategy, and UN-GGIM Europe Work Plan 2022, which were adopted and approved at their eighth and ninth plenaries respectively. The Committee is invited to take note of this report, the supporting background documents, and the items for noting at paragraph 23.

II. Regional Committees of UN-GGIM

A. Plenary Meetings

5. The annual meetings of the regional committees provide a forum for Member States and other relevant geospatial stakeholders to share and exchange knowledge, technologies and best practices, network, and gain updates on the activities of their regional working groups.

6. As is required by statute and rules of procedure, all regional committees convened their annual meeting during the intersessional period, as shown in Table 1. It is to be noted that UN-GGIM Europe convened two plenary meetings during the intersessional period. This was due to COVID-19 restrictions. Its eighth plenary was rescheduled to October 2021 because the

Committee had hoped to convene an in-person meeting at that time, but which then had to be convened virtually because of continued travel restrictions.

Regional Committees	Dates of Last Annual Meeting	Mode and Host
Asia and the Pacific	10 th Plenary, 2 & 4 Nov. 2021	Virtual, hosted by Indonesia
Americas	8 th Session, 16-19 Nov. 2021	Virtual, Mexico & ECLAC
Africa	7 th Session, 22-26 Nov. 2021	Hybrid, Cote d'Ivoire
Europe	8 th Plenary, 13-14 Oct. 2021	Virtual hosted by Eurostat
Europe	9 th Plenary, 20-21 June 2022	In person UNECE, Geneva
Arab States	9 th Plenary, 29 March 2022	Virtual, Saudi Arabia

Table 1: UN-GGIM Regional Committee Annual Meetings 2021-2022

7. Table 2 shows the number of attendees and Member States that participated in the past two plenaries of each regional committee. It also shows the increase or decrease in the number of attendees and Member States that participated. Please note that a Member State may be a member of more than one regional committee. For example, UN-GGIM Europe has 16 members who are also members of UN-GGIM Asia and the Pacific and UN-GGIM Americas. Therefore, the total number of Member States per region as shown in table two is not based on regional geographical demarcation.

Regional Committees	Total Member States	No. Attendees and Member States, 2020-2021 Plenaries		No. Attendees and Member States, 2021-2022 Plenaries		Change in No. Attendees and Member States	
		Attendees	Member States	Attendees	Member States	Attendees	Member States
Asia and the Pacific	56	174	22 (39%)	109	21 (37%)	-65	-2
Americas	36	128	27 (75%)	175	28 (78%)	+47	+1
Africa	54	90	32 (59%)	80	27 (50%)	-10	-5
Europe	56	100	34 (61%)	110	35 (62%)	+10	+1
Arab States	22	46	13 (59%)	59	13 (59%)	+13	0

Table 2: Number of attendees and Member States participated in 2020-2021 Regional Committee Plenaries

8. The number of attendees at each annual plenary meeting is important, as the regional committee's governing statutes or rules of procedure generally requires a quorum to designate the meeting as valid and official. For example, UN-GGIM Asia Pacific requires that a committee meeting be comprised of at least 15 members, UN-GGIM Americas requires half of their members plus one to be present, which would be 19, UN-GGIM Africa needs a majority of its members to be present, and UN-GGIM Europe requires that half of its active membership, including virtual attendees, be present, which would be 28. It therefore appears that for the reporting period all regional committees met the requirements to convene legally constituted annual meetings. Further, the UN-GGIM Regional Committee for Asia Pacific may wish to evaluate the number of Member States represented at their plenary meetings over the past five to ten years, if they have not already done so. The objective of such an exercise would be to determine if the percentage attendance has been consistently below 50 percent (see Table 2), identify what may be the contributing factors and what strategies may be employed to increase attendance numbers.

9. An existential challenge for the Committee of Experts and its regional committees is being able to sustainably finance the participation of nominated national experts to global and regional annual meetings. It has been opined that the COVID-related restrictions necessitated the migration to online/e-mode of operations and therefore virtual meetings. Virtual meetings negate the need to finance travel and therefore should improve the probability and ability for Member States to attend the annual meetings of their regional committees. Based on this line

of reasoning, there should have been an increase in the number of Member States and attendees at regional committee meetings in 2020 and 2021. To verify the accuracy of this opinion, 2019 participation figures were used as a baseline year, when all regional committees had in-person meetings. These figures were then compared with the 2020 and 2021 participation figures for virtual meetings. Appendix 1 provides figures and charts.

10. The comparison showed that indeed, there was an increase in total participation in the virtual mode across regional committees. However, there were anomalies. For example, participation in the UN-GGIM Arab States region remained constant, with a miniscule decrease in the number of attendees in 2020. On the other hand, there was reduced Member States participation in UN-GGIM Americas, moving from 32 in 2019 (in-person) to 27 and 28 for 2020 and 2021 (in the virtual mode) respectively. Conversely there was an increase in the number of attendees, from 84 in 2019 to 128 in 2020 and 175 in 2021. Figures for UN-GGIM Europe showed that there was a marked increase in Member States attendance, from 24 in 2019, to 34 and 35 for 2020 and 2021 respectively (Appendix 1).

11. While the objective is to bring all Member States to the table to benefit from the interactions and exchanges emanating from the meetings of the regional committees; which should have been made achievable through increased levels of participation resulting from virtual meetings, it is not possible to determine if the changes in participation levels was a factor due to the pandemic. Other factors may have contributed to changes in participation, such as inequality in access to digital resources, access to high-quality and affordable bandwidth, health challenges, and competing national priorities. In fact, virtual meetings attendance figures should be viewed as rough estimates and not absolutely accurate.

12. Notwithstanding, the UN-GGIM regional committees have identified the need to secure sustainable financing to support the participation of Member States, particularly for representatives from small island developing States, at regional committee's annual plenary meetings.

13. Table 3 shows the regional committee's proposed annual meetings for 2022 to 2023. The Committee of Experts is being asked to note the dates of the proposed annual meetings and that they will be held fully in-person or hybrid.

Regional Committees	Date of Upcoming Annual Meetings	Mode and Location
Asia and the Pacific	11 th Plenary, 14 Oct. 2022	In person, Hyderabad, India, on margins of 2 nd WGIC
Americas	9 th Session, 21-23 Nov. 2022	Santiago Chile, Hybrid mode
Africa	8 th Session, 24-28 Oct. 2022	In person. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in conjunction with the Statistical Commission for Africa (in person)
Europe	10 th Plenary, May or June 2023	Brussels, Belgium Sponsored by Eurostat
Arab States	10 th Plenary, Feb. 2023	Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Table 3 UN-GGIM Regional Committee Proposed Annual Meetings 2022-2023

B. Administrative arrangements

14. Three of the five regional committees – Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas – now have the distinction of implementing paragraph 11 of ECOSOC resolution 2016/27, which “requests that the regional commissions provide relevant support, upon request and as appropriate, to the work of the regional bodies ...”. At its eighth annual meeting, UN-GGIM Americas approved, in decision 2121/14, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Statistics Division, providing technical secretariat services. These services include

supporting annual sessions, assisting with the development of technical capabilities, monitoring the continuity of projects and connecting with relevant global activities among other activities. UN-GGIM Europe reported having a successful collaboration agreement (2018-2020) with the Economic Commission for Europe, which has produced tangible results. The agreement is to be renewed for a further two years.

15. It is recognized that the UN-GGIM regional committees have different forms, types and years of administrative and working relations with their respective UN Economic Commissions. Organizations and their representatives exist in a dynamic and continuously evolving world. For organizations to remain relevant and satisfy the needs and requirements of its constituents/members it must adopt, adapt and/or change its structures and operations. Therefore, at some time in the future, perhaps within the next three to four years, regional committees may collectively consider conducting a review and evaluation exercise to determine what aspects of the administrative and working arrangements between UN-GGIM regional committees and UN Economic Commissions have worked effectively and efficiently, and what can be improved and/or discarded.

16. Other administrative changes across the regional committees included changes in the Bureau of UN-GGIM Americas. The Committee of Experts is invited to welcome the new president – Chile, vice president – United States, and other new members of the Board for UN-GGIM Americas. The Boards/Bureaux for other regional committees were re-elected and/or extended for an additional period.

C. Regional Committee Work Programmes

17. The work programmes of most regional committees are executed through working groups. Regional committees support their Member States through the webinars and workshops organized, the development of manuals and toolkits and other capacity building efforts. Table 4 shows the work areas addressed by each regional committee.

Priority Work Items /Working Groups	Asia & Pacific	Americas	Africa	Europe	Arab States
i. Data Integration/ Integration of statistical and geospatial data	X	X	X	X	X
ii. Fundamental geospatial data and standards					X
iii. Disasters		X			
iv. Integrated Geospatial Information Framework		X		X	X
v. Global geodetic reference frame	X	X	X	X	X
vi. Cadastre and land management	X		X		
vii. Institutional arrangements and policy and legal framework			X		
viii. Sustainable development goals				X	
ix. Data strategy and policy				X	

Table 4: UN-GGIM Regional Committee Work items/Working Groups

18. UN-GGIM Asia Pacific retains its working group configuration and continues to work on three priority areas. UN-GGIM Americas, under its new leadership, has prepared a strategic vision and work plan for the period 2021 to 2025. The existing four working groups are to be

reformulated and their names changed to be more aligned to the Committee of Experts' existing global frameworks. UN-GGIM Africa's work is built around seven pillars which includes supporting the implementation of the IGIF, and the integration of geospatial and statistical information, among others. UN-GGIM Europe has adopted their 2022 to 2025 work plan, provided as a background document to their report. Their work plan is an 11 page document which builds upon the three strategic pillars of their Strategy, sets out five lines of work, shows how they are aligned to the global work programme of the Committee of Experts, and also focusses on the needs and priorities of their region. The four working groups of UN-GGIM Arab States continued to work together to implement and enhance their strategic goals and work plans. Additional information on the work items of each Regional Committee is provided in the list that follows.

<i>Regional committee</i>	<i>Work areas and activities</i>
Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus building: organization of regional meetings and a workshop on geospatial value and integration • Knowledge generation: development of the African Geospatial Development Index; creation of a space-time cube for analyzing community mobility patterns in Africa; preparation of a report on assessing availability of fundamental geospatial data sets for the Sustainable Development Goals • Capacity development: development of e-learning course on geospatial governance and policy development for French-speaking countries • Development of a spatial data dissemination platform for Africa, called UNECA UN-PDF Project. Accessible here: shorturl.at/oBEFM
Americas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplan 2021–2025 and Strategic Vision • Working groups, their realignment and work: global statistical and geospatial framework, strategic framework for geospatial information and services for disasters, geodetic reference frame for the Americas, and Integrated Geospatial Information Framework • Regional collaboration: joint plan of action to implement the Aguascalientes Declaration, the Digital Earth Americas project, the Caribbean Geospatial Development Initiative, the Chile-Mexico project, the statistical and geospatial information integration project in Central America, and volunteered geographic information • Work and achievements of the Academic Network and the Private Sector Network • New role of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean as the Regional Committee's technical secretariat

Arab States	<p>Working group activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Geospatial Information Framework: workshops featuring strategic pathways on governance and institutions and on capacity and education • Fundamental geospatial data and geostandards: three virtual workshops on geospatial data systems, geospatial portals and advanced level geoportal development • Global geodetic reference frame: two virtual workshops addressing challenges and finding solutions to support the Region's geodetic work and the preparation of an action plan • Integration of geospatial and statistical information: three virtual workshops on learning from country experiences of conducting 2020 censuses in the light of the pandemic and the integration between work partners
Asia and the Pacific	<p>Through their working groups, the following work areas are being supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geodetic data-sharing and technical capacity development to address global issues such as sea-level change and disaster risk reduction • Strengthening human capacity-building and developing capacity-building programmes related to cadastre and land management in order to incorporate professionals, future young professionals and vulnerable groups and reflect a gender balance. • Following document published: second compendium in its 'Geospatial Practices for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific' series. • Knowledge exchange within member countries through more technical activities and the development of a geospatial information statistics integration platform
Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New strategy and workplan to match the needs of the region based on three pillars: sharing knowledge, raising awareness and strategic leadership • Workplan focused on five key priority areas: the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the geodetic reference frame, data integration, the Sustainable Development Goals, and data strategy and policy • Collaboration between national mapping and cadastral authorities and national statistical institutes in the European Region, along with European institutions and observer bodies • Recommendation for content for 14 core data themes has been proposed, now available here: shorturl.at/aCNSX

19. The pandemic has served to reinforce the importance of building and or strengthening multi sector, bilateral and regional relationships, collaborations, and partnerships to enable business continuity and generate efficiencies in the generation, analysis, dissemination and use of geospatial information to support national priorities, development decisions and programmes. All regional committees have reported on the importance of collaborations and communication and the mutual benefits accruable from working together.

20. Reference is made to the UN-GGIM thematic groups, their role and level of support provided to UN-GGIM regional committees. UN-GGIM Europe and the Americas reported on the collaborations and joint activities conducted. There however is scope for greater engagement among the regional committees and the Thematic Groups, to leverage the strengths and technical resources available within the Geospatial Societies and the Academic Network. Regional committees may consider identifying areas of support needed and reach out to relevant bodies within the Thematic Groups for assistance.

D. Challenges being experienced by UN-GGIM Regional Committees

21. The regional committees have shared in their reports their challenges, have tendered possible strategies, and have also asked UN-GGIM stakeholders for support. The following are some of the main challenges and issues shared:

- (a) The geospatial and related technology landscape is rapidly evolving and changing, and therefore the need for regional committees to be agile, dynamic and active in their response in order to maintain their relevance, is well recognized.
- (b) A properly resourced UN-GGIM Secretariat makes for a sustainable and operational UN-GGIM global, regional and local work programme. Strengthening the institutional arrangements of the Committee of Experts is recognized, and regional committees have been calling on their Member States to support the work being done by the Friends of the co-Chairs.
- (c) There is scope to strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing experiences among the five regional committees. A joint regional committee side event entitled ‘Working together towards cooperation and coordination of UN – GGIM Regional Committees’ is to be convened on the margins of this twelfth session of the Committee of Experts in an effort to address this concern.
- (d) UN-GGIM Africa has noted that national mapping agencies in Africa need to be modernized in order to remain relevant, thus necessitating strengthening capacities of these agencies through comprehensive development programmes.

22. Regional committees expressed commitment to continue providing their regions with forums for their representatives to meet, discuss and collaborate on addressing their challenges, and also gave assurances to continue to align their work to the changing environment and the global geospatial agenda. The annual reports of all five regional committees of UN-GGIM are provided as background documents to this present report under agenda item five.

III. Points for noting

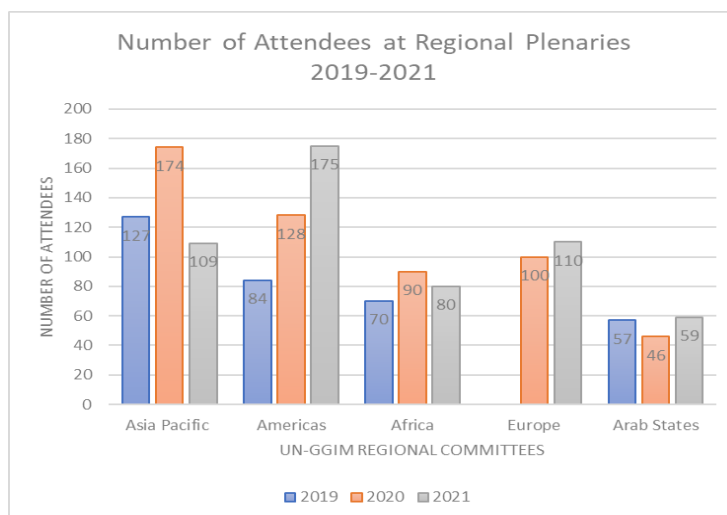
23. The Committee of Experts is invited to:

- (a) Note the present report and background documents provided by the five regional committees of UN-GGIM, including UN-GGIM: Europe’s strategy and work plan;**

- (b) Further note the proposed dates of the upcoming plenary meetings for all five UN-GGIM regional committees as shown in Table 3, and encourage their Member State representatives to attend the meetings;**
- (c) Recognizing that no Member States should be left behind, encourage all Member States to continue contributing and to take advantage of the possibilities offered by UN-GGIM to discuss, coordinate and improve the availability and use of geospatial information across all regions.**

Appendix 1

Attendees			
	2019	2020	2021
Asia Pacific	127	174	109
Americas	84	128	175
Africa	70	90	80
Europe		100	110
Arab States	57	46	59
		538	533



Member States			
	2019	2020	2021
Asia Pacific	21	22	21
Americas	32	27	28
Africa	18	32	27
Europe	24	34	35
Arab States	14	13	13
	109	128	124

