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Integrated Geospatial Information framework

Integrated Geospatial Information Framework

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the High-level Group on the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework 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 11/103, in which it recognized the efforts by the High-level Group to quickly establish itself and develop an ambitious plan to provide the strategic leadership and guidance at that fundamental phase of the Framework. The Committee endorsed the strategic plan of the High-level Group and supported the three priority goals identified for immediate attention – improve communication, strengthen capacity development, and mobilize sustainable funding – as a means for developing the High-level Group’s initial plan of work to guide its focus and activities for the next two years. The Committee of Experts also recognized the relevance and urgency of adequately resourcing the refinement and finalization of the Implementation Guide of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, updating the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework Overarching Strategic Framework, and completing related tools and resource materials to assist Member States in the development of their Country-level Action Plans. These actions were identified as a high priority for strengthening national geospatial information management at the institutional level and for supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee stressed the pressing need to obtain sustained funding for the implementation and iterative development of the Framework so that it endured as a living instrument, was reviewed in a constant process, was kept up to date and was based on the practical implementation experiences of Member States.

The Committee of Experts encouraged the convening of global and regional forums, especially with decision makers in non-geospatial global institutions, to share good practices and successful strategies for Framework implementation at the country level. Lastly, the Committee encouraged the High-level Group to continue to engage with the regional commissions and the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees and thematic groups to promote and implement the Framework and support the strengthening of regional geospatial information management.

* E/C.20/2022/1

This present report provides information on the progress and activities of the High-level Group, including its working methods and the meetings that it has held. At its fourth virtual meeting, held in November 2021, the High-level Group reviewed and consulted the draft plan of work for 2022–2023. At its fifth virtual meeting, held in February 2022, the High-level Group welcomed a new Co-Chair to sustain the current level of executive leadership following the request by Sweden to step down owing to increased national commitments. The Group welcomed the United States of America, joining Ethiopia to co-chair the High-level Group and provide executive leadership going forward.

In the report, information is also provided on the first plenary meeting of the High-level Group, held in person at United Nations Headquarters from 26 to 28 April 2022. The meeting was co-convened with the Bureau of the Committee of Experts and Friends of the Co-Chairs of the Committee. The Co-Chairs of the High-level Group and the Co-Chairs of the Committee worked together through an integrated agenda that included an engagement segment with the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council. A summary of the first plenary meeting outcomes on strategies to help to sustain Framework implementation within countries is also included in the report. The overarching concepts were related to aligning country-level actions with national priorities, communicating benefits through success stories, and developing a high-level version of the Implementation Guide of the Framework.

The report also includes information on efforts and progress towards refining and finalizing the Implementation Guide, which is intended to be a living and evolving practical document. This includes the provision of assistance, including resources and learning materials, for the development of Country-level Action Plans for strengthening national capacities to effectively manage geospatial resources and to modernize national geospatial information arrangements in Member States, in particular in developing countries. The report also serves to inform the Committee of Experts of the capacity development approach by the Secretariat to support the operationalization of the Framework at the country level, including through the eleventh tranche of the United Nations Development Account project (project 1819D), as well as the multi-stakeholder SDG Data Alliance partnership, in which the United Nations is a partner.

The Committee of Experts is expected to provide inputs and guidance and to discuss support to resource the refinement, finalization, translation, and digital publication of the Framework's suite of documents, including the Overarching Strategic Framework, the Implementation Guide, and tools and resource materials through which to assess, design and develop Country-level Action Plans, especially given the importance and urgency of the matter. The Committee will be invited to provide further guidance on the way forward for Member States to implement the Framework as a forward-looking framework at the country level, across the work areas of the Committee and pertaining to data domains, the Framework's interlinkages with other regional-to-global frameworks and its continued adoption in response to increasingly challenging national, regional, and global demands.

I. Introduction

1. At its tenth session, held virtually on 26 and 27 August and 4 September 2020, the Committee of Experts, in making decision 10/103, noted the global significance of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), which serves as a key umbrella for the many activities under the purview of the Committee, its regional committees, and thematic groups, and which could be applied to any country to guide transformative change. The Committee recognized that both developed and developing countries were currently implementing the Framework and developing Country-level Action Plans in accordance with the available guidance and resource materials, and it emphasized the importance of maintaining the impact and continuity of the Framework at all levels.

2. In making decision 10/103, the Committee of Experts endorsed the establishment of a dedicated High-level Group (HLG) of experts, with balanced geographical representation and expertise, as a mechanism to provide strategic leadership, coordination, and oversight to ensure the sustained success of the IGIF, and to mobilize the resources necessary to maintain the momentum and refinement of the IGIF as a continuously evolving process.

3. At its eleventh session, held virtually on 23, 24 and 27 August 2021, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 11/103, in which it recognized the efforts by the High-level Group of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF) to quickly establish itself and develop an ambitious plan to provide the strategic leadership and guidance at that fundamental phase of the Framework. The Committee endorsed the strategic plan of the High-level Group and supported the three priority goals identified for immediate attention – improve communication, strengthen capacity development, and mobilize sustainable funding – as a means for developing the High-level Group’s initial plan of work to guide its focus and activities for the next two years.

4. Also in decision 11/103, the Committee of Experts recognized the relevance and urgency of adequately resourcing the refinement and finalization of the Implementation Guide for the IGIF, the updating of the IGIF Overarching Strategic Framework, and the completion of related resource materials to assist Member States in the development of their Country-level Action Plans as a means of strengthening national geospatial information management at the institutional level and supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. In making decision 11/103, the Committee of Experts endorsed the Strategic Plan of the High-level Group, including its six defined goals and focus actions, and supported the three priority goals identified for immediate attention as a means for developing the High-level Group’s initial Plan of Work to guide its activities for the next two years. The Committee of Experts noted several suggestions which are addressed in this report for the High-level Group to consider in the development of its Plan of Work.

6. In this present report, information is provided on the progress and activities of the High-level Group, including its working methods, working groups, the meetings it has held virtually and in person, and how the Group incorporated the suggestions of the Committee of Experts into its Plan of Work. The report further serves to inform the Committee of Experts of the efforts and progress made on the Plan of Work, including efforts to refine and finalize the Implementation Guide, as well as the tools and resource materials to aid in the development of Country-level Action Plans to strengthen national geospatial information arrangements in Member States, particularly in developing countries.

7. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report and to express its views on the activities of the High-level Group and way forward on the further refinement and development of the IGIF. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 55.

II. Activities of the HLG-IGIF

8. At its tenth session, the Committee of Experts recognized the global significance of the IGIF, and in making decision 10/103, endorsed the establishment of a dedicated High-level Group of experts, with balanced geographical representation and expertise, as a mechanism to provide strategic leadership, coordination, and oversight to ensure the sustained success of the IGIF. This important decision emphasized the international nature of coordination and cooperation needed to continue the development and implementation of the IGIF under the purview of the Committee of Experts, and that adequate resourcing for the new High-level Group is imperative to generate significant impact and to secure effective operation of the Group.

9. The first meeting of the HLG-IGIF was convened virtually on 25 February 2021 and provided the opportunity for the Group to confirm its mandate, objectives, role, membership composition, and methods of work. This included the election of its two co-Chairs, Ethiopia and Sweden, and the unanimous adoption of its Terms of Reference¹. The HLG-IGIF agreed that its immediate priority was to begin considering and developing its initial Programme of Work, comprising a Strategic Plan and Plan of Work, as its roadmap to prioritize and guide its focus and activities for the next 2 years. The Summary Report² of the first meeting is available on the dedicated HLG-IGIF website³.

10. Given the importance of its establishment phase, the HLG-IGIF agreed to convene its second meeting within three months, on 20 May 2021, to focus on strategic issues and to discuss the initial programme of work and its details. As detailed in the Summary Report⁴ of the second virtual meeting the HLG-IGIF discussed at length its draft Strategic Plan, the first iteration of which was prepared by the co-Chairs of the HLG-IGIF, and in recognition of the need to be strategic, executive, and avoid being too technical.

HLG-IGIF Strategic Plan

11. The HLG-IGIF Strategic Plan was developed based on the mandates and key functions vested to the HLG-IGIF by the Committee of Experts. A key objective was to quickly leverage the collective executive-level expertise, knowledge, experience, and commitment of the members of the HLG-IGIF, and to ensure that appropriate plans are formulated for assisting all Member States, independent of their maturity in geospatial information management. In defining six strategic goals, each with focused actions and expected outcomes that adhere to the HLG-IGIF Terms of Reference (ToR), the Strategic Plan served as a guide in proposing, formulating, implementing, and maintaining the IGIF as appropriate for all countries.

12. The six strategic goals pertaining to the implementation and sustainability of the IGIF at the country level are:

Goal 1: Improve Communication

¹ https://ggim.un.org/documents/HLG-IGIF_ToR_February%202021.pdf

² https://ggim.un.org/documents/Summary_Report_HLG-IGIF_1st_Meeting-25Feb2021.pdf

³ <https://ggim.un.org/UNGGIM-HLG-IGIF/>

⁴ https://ggim.un.org/documents/Summary_Report_2nd_meeting_rev.pdf

Goal 2: Promote Data Governance, Availability, and Accessibility

Goal 3: Strengthen Capacity Development

Goal 4: Mobilize Sustainable Funding

Goal 5: Encourage Collaboration, Exchange and Sharing

Goal 6: Oversee Improvement and Review

13. A third virtual meeting on 29 July 2021 was convened to finalize the HLG-IGIF Strategic Plan. At its eleventh session, the Committee of Experts endorsed the Strategic Plan of the High-level Group, including its six defined goals and focus actions, and supported the three priority goals identified for immediate attention – Goal 1: Improve Communication, Goal 3: Strengthen Capacity Development, and Goal 4: Mobilize Sustainable Funding – as a means for developing the High-level Group’s initial Plan of Work to guide its activities for the next two years.

HLG-IGIF Plan of Work

14. At its eleventh session, the Committee of Experts noted several suggestions in decision 11/103 for the High-level Group to consider in the development of its Plan of Work:

- (i) The refinement and finalization of the Implementation Guide of the IGIF remains a high priority for Member States and an important basis for the development of a global community for sharing knowledge and harmonizing the integration of geospatial information at the country level, without which there was a risk that the core focus of the Framework might become diluted and inconsistent in its adoption and implementation.
- (ii) The pressing need to obtain sustained funding for the implementation and iterative development of the IGIF so that it endured as a living instrument, was reviewed in a constant process, kept up to date and based on the practical implementation experiences of Member States.
- (iii) Noting that the geospatial community often faces challenges in effectively communicating and promoting knowledge and awareness of the IGIF, especially with decision makers in non-geospatial global institutions, the convening of IGIF forums at the global and regional levels to share good practices and successful strategies for Framework implementation at the country level would be beneficial in strengthening capacity development.
- (iv) Noting the variability in the levels of national circumstances and conditions (e.g., governance, technology, and capacity) between developed and developing countries when establishing a Country-level Action Plan, a set of performance indicators or diagnostic measures might assist countries as they determine which priority goals, activities, and actions to apply in their respective IGIF Country-level Action Plans.
- (v) Embedding the IGIF, as a tangible framework, into existing United Nations conventions, agreements, and frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to guarantee high-level political awareness of the Framework and its long-term sustainability.
- (vi) Clear mechanisms to provide adequate resources to support the implementation of the IGIF in developing countries, to develop national Country-level Action Plans that could be effectively operationalized and, with a view to having a

significant impact for geospatially enabled e-services, embarking on a path towards digital transformation and to bridge the geospatial digital divide.

- (vii) That the High-level Group continued to engage with the regional commissions and the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees to promote and implement the IGIF and support the strengthening of regional geospatial information management.

15. Taking into consideration the suggestions outlined by the Committee of Experts, the co-Chairs of the HLG-IGIF, with assistance from the Secretariat, developed a draft Plan of Work that was reviewed and consulted at its fourth virtual meeting in November 2021. The Plan of Work detailed the tasks and activities for 2022-2023 that are necessary to implement the three strategic goals prioritized for immediate action – Goal 1: Improve Communication, Goal 3: Strengthen Capacity Development, and Goal 4: Mobilize Sustainable Funding. The United Kingdom was selected to lead the efforts to advance Goal 1: Improve Communication.

16. At the fifth virtual meeting of the HLG-IGIF in February 2022, a new co-Chair was designated to sustain the current level of executive leadership for the High-level Group. The membership of the High-level Group thanked Sweden (Lantmateriet) for its energetic leadership during this fundamental phase. The membership welcomed the United States of America (Census Bureau) who joined Ethiopia (Geospatial Information Institute) to co-Chair the High-level-Group and to continue the level of executive leadership going forward. In addition, the Plan of Work was finalized and is provided as a background document to this report as a reference document. Initial progress on Goal 1: Improve Communication was also presented and reviewed, including the presentation of a draft Communication Strategy and draft Communication Plan.

17. The High-level Group held its first in-person meeting at United Nations Headquarters from 26 to 28 April 2022. The meeting was held jointly with the UN-GGIM Bureau and Friends of the co-Chairs of UN-GGIM and had 24 member states in attendance. The co-Chairs of the High-level Group and co-Chairs of UN-GGIM developed an integrated agenda for the three days, which included an engagement with the Bulgarian Vice President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The meeting was successful in raising awareness of the IGIF as an overarching paradigm and umbrella Framework for the programme of work of UN-GGIM, underpinning the value proposition of the UN-GGIM to all Member States, and helping to confirm the urgency and importance for strengthening of institutional arrangements on global geospatial information management. It was underscored that sustainable resources must be made available to implement the IGIF, strengthen national geospatial information management, and develop geospatial capacity and capabilities at the country-level to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

18. During the meeting, progress on the Communication Strategy and Communication Plan was reviewed, initial recommendations on messaging, taglines, and logos for the IGIF were considered, and a logo was selected. Co-Leads were also identified for each of the three priority goals, with the United Kingdom and Indonesia leading Goal 1: Improve Communication, Sweden and Argentina leading Goal 3: Strengthen Capacity Development, and South Africa and Jamaica leading Goal 4: Mobilize Sustainable Funding. The co-Leads organized breakout sessions where they reviewed the tasks on the Plan of Work for their goal and started the process of assigning tasks to working group members.

19. Working groups meet once per month to facilitate progress against the tasks and activities outlined on the Plan of Work. The HLG-IGIF has established a monthly process for reporting each working group's progress against the Plan of Work. This reporting is used

to update the HLG-IGIF Plan of Work, show progress on all the activities, and allow the co-Chairs to see, at a glance, how the Plan of Work is progressing and to focus on achievements and items that may require attention. By updating monthly slides with current accomplishments, upcoming activities, concerns, and an activity status indicator (green, yellow, or red), co-Leads of the HLG-IGIF working groups share important information each month and the co-Chairs are able to track progress in a Plan of Work Progress Chart.

20. At its sixth virtual meeting on 28 June 2022, the HLG-IGIF planned for the upcoming twelfth session of the Committee of Experts and reviewed progress against the Plan of Work. Current progress against each of the three goals on the Plan of Work are discussed below. The Plan of Work is provided as a background document for reference by the Committee of Experts.

III. Improve communication

21. As identified in the HLG-IGIF Strategic Plan, improving communication, and specifically, developing and implementing a communication strategy to create awareness on the importance and relevance of the IGIF for policy- and decision-makers, is a key strategic goal and a priority. Integrated communication strategies allow countries to meaningfully engage and involve individuals, organizations, and other groups in policy and program development, create awareness, develop partnerships and synergies, avoid duplication, and generate momentum. Embedding communications across the implementation process and applying communication techniques to ‘expand the use of data’, including a focus on key concepts, compels reason for change.

22. At its fifth virtual meeting in February 2022, the working group to Improve Communications presented and reviewed a draft Communication Strategy and draft Communication Plan. These documents were finalized during the sixth virtual meeting in June 2022 and will form key elements of the IGIF Implementation Guide and Country-level Action Plan resource materials for countries. The working group continues to advance the Communication Plan, including the recent selection of a logo, the development of key IGIF messages and materials, and the creation of an IGIF Newsletter. Work has also begun to develop a standard PowerPoint Presentation template and to solicit IGIF Case Studies to promote positive outcomes and impacts of implementing IGIF at the country level.

23. The Communication Guidance and Resource Kit developed in 2021 has been tested and is now being utilized to raise awareness, and to improve advocacy and visibility of nationally integrated geospatial information management and the benefits that can be derived from it. With key messages designed to emphasize UN ‘ownership’ of the IGIF and to provide a common language for communication, this guidance and resource kit supported and complemented communications efforts of the IGIF country project teams of Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Fiji, Mongolia, Nepal, and the Kingdom of Tonga as they designed and developed their Country-level Action Plans and moved forward with implementing the IGIF.

IV. Strengthen capacity development

Refinement and Finalization of the Implementation Guide and Resource Materials

24. In making decision 11/103, the Committee of Experts noted that the refinement and finalization of the Implementation Guide of the IGIF remains a high priority. As such, the Secretariat and the HLG-IGIF Capacity Development Working Group, continue to work to refine, finalize, translate, and digitally publish the IGIF Implementation Guide. This effort

will also include the updating of the IGIF Overarching Strategic Framework to reflect updates and changes made to the Implementation Guide.

25. The formulation of the Implementation Guide was well informed and influenced by a broad global consultation process. The consultation followed 15 IGIF events that included expert meetings, workshops, and seminars with more than 730 participants from 133 countries from October 2018 to February 2020 and realized 68 responses yielding 1350 separate items to review and consider. The wealth of expert contributions and inputs across all ten chapters of the Implementation Guide⁵, including detailed comments and feedback, together with many country-level experiences leveraging the IGIF, have considerably sharpened and strengthened the implementation guidance and recommended actions.

26. Adjudicating the comments and feedback from the consultation process and many country-level experiences has been time consuming. With limited resources available in the Secretariat, the refinement and finalization process has been slower than otherwise desired. The Secretariat continues to refine and finalize the Implementation Guide, with six of ten chapters currently completed and posted online and a seventh chapter nearly complete. The HLG-IGIF Capacity Development Working Group will assist with the finalization and editing process but does not have the very detailed knowledge obtained through the multi-year consultation process and the hands-on country-level interactions that the Secretariat has experienced.

27. The HLG-IGIF Capacity Development Group is also working to identify resources to translate the Implementation Guide into all of the official UN languages. The six chapters that are currently complete have already been translated into French, and additional resources have been identified to translate the guide into Spanish and Arabic, which will commence shortly. The HLG-IGIF will work to identify resources to translate the guide into the remaining two UN languages.

28. At its eleventh session, the Committee of Experts also noted the variability in the levels of national circumstances and conditions (e.g., governance, technology, and capacity) between developed and developing countries and recommended a set of performance indicators or diagnostic measures that might assist countries as they determine which priority goals, activities, and actions to apply in their respective IGIF Country-level Action Plans.

29. A series of guides and resource materials were developed and piloted with the initial six partnering countries to provide performance indicators and diagnostic measures to help Member States assess their current situation and determine which priority goals, activities, and actions to apply as they develop their individual Country-level Action Plans. These guides and resource materials allowed countries to work through a series of tasks and assessments methodically, and included engagements with strategic stakeholders, affording better understanding of national circumstances, gaps and needs, and ensuring alignment with national development priorities. These materials help countries identify their required priorities in determining their plans and actions to strengthen geospatial information management nationally. These guides and resource materials, including a policy and legal resource kit and a communications resource kit, will be collated, refined, and made available to support the preparation and development of Country-level Action Plans by other countries.

30. The Implementation Guide is a living document that needs to be continually refined and improved in an evolving process, as are the tools and resource materials that support and help Member States through the development and implementation process. However,

⁵ As noted in the report to the tenth session of the Committee of Experts: https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/10th-Session/documents/E-C.20-2020-25-Add_1-Integrated-Geospatial-Information-Framework-7Aug2020.pdf

continual refinement represents a significant and ongoing task that is presently under-resourced. This reinforces the pressing need for strengthened institutional arrangements for the Committee of Experts so that critical resources for the IGIF can be updated, maintained, and strengthened, allowing all countries to benefit from the experiences of early IGIF country experiences and implementations.

31. Many countries, both developed and developing, are now implementing the IGIF and developing their own Country-level Action Plan, based on the Implementation Guide and tools and resources that are presently available. The Implementation Guide has benefitted from, and been informed and enhanced by, the experience and national circumstances of these implementing countries. Mindful of this, the length of the Guide, and that there is only so much information that can be provided, the HLG-IGIF will consider the necessary training needed to support the IGIF, including an evaluation of the current World Bank IGIF virtual training modules and recommendations for additional training modules that might be required to assist Member States wanting to implement the various actions recommended in the Implementation Guide.

Training for the IGIF

32. In the last quarter of 2021, and with financial assistance provided from the Republic of Korea, the World Bank's Open Learning Campus (OLC) and the Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Land Global Practice conducted the third 4-week series of valuable and well-attended self-paced virtual knowledge learning weeks that focused on 'Strengthening Geospatial Information Management: Using the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF).'⁶ With 560 participants from 98 countries, the series builds on work to e-package global learning and innovation for leveraging sustainable development to contribute to socio-economic improvements, and included the efforts of governments, the private sector and academia.

33. The HLG-IGIF Capacity Development Working Group will make recommendations for a comprehensive training program for the IGIF, which will include an evaluation of the existing World Bank e-Learning modules and how they might fit with the overall IGIF training program. Recommendations for additional e-Learning modules will also be considered by the HLG. The goal is to have a comprehensive training program for the IGIF that will ensure consistency and accessibility to all Member States.

34. The Secretariat has also implemented a Train-the-Trainer approach during the UN Development Account 11th tranche Project 1819D, conducting in-person training in the six initial countries to ensure that we have resources in different parts of the world that can assist countries with in-person implementation guidance, capacity development and training. By way of example, the training and experiences gained and shared between Burkina Faso and Ethiopia have recently been utilized at their final IGIF Country-level Action Plan Workshops. This same approach has been applied for Fiji and Tonga. This has included each of the countries attending and sharing experiences. Given the difficulty of global travel for in-person capacity development and training, the Secretariat and HLG-IGIF have also utilized side-events and workshops to share best practices and provide training and capacity development opportunities for Member States. These activities are discussed below.

⁶ <https://olc.worldbank.org/content/strengthening-geospatial-information-management-using-integrated-geospatial-information>

Global and Regional Forums, Workshops and Side Events

35. At its eleventh session, the Committee of Experts noted that the geospatial community often faces challenges in effectively communicating and promoting knowledge and awareness of the IGIF, especially with decision makers in non-geospatial global institutions, and recommended the convening of IGIF forums or events at the global and regional levels to share good practices and successful strategies for implementation at the country level and strengthening capacity development.

36. Global and regional events were somewhat hindered in late 2021 and early 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the eleventh session, a virtual IGIF side event was held to share good practices and successful strategies for implementing IGIF at the country level. This was followed by the third World Bank self-paced virtual knowledge learning week in late 2021 – Strengthening Geospatial Information Management: Using the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF). Virtual methods were used to share implementation experiences and good practices until second quarter of 2022 when travel became more open.

37. The nine Strategic Pathways of the IGIF were used as the lens for considering practical advice for ‘Applying Geospatial Data to Climate Challenges’ at the Cambridge Conference on Climate Change, 12-14 April 2022. The Cambridge Conference looked at how national geospatial and mapping agencies can make changes in their institutions to implement the recommendations from the ‘Cambridge Conference Statement Paper on Climate Change’, promoting best practices and successful strategies for utilizing the IGIF to address the challenges of climate change. Later in April, the HLG took advantage of the first in-person meeting since the Group was formed to share good practices and lessons learned on development and implementation of County-level Action Plans from both developed and developing countries.

38. In addition, all regional committees of UN-GGIM are conducting capacity development workshops and events to promote the widespread implementation of the IGIF, including during their annual plenary meetings. For example, in March 2022, UN-GGIM: Europe held a joint meeting with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which featured the IGIF and plans to support its implementation. During its Ninth Plenary Session, convened 20-21 June 2022, UN-GGIM Europe established an IGIF working group with a specific mandate to support the HLG-IGIF with its goals and implementation of the Plan of Work. Plans include having a pool of experts to support the HLG-IGIF working groups – with one expert provided for each of the three HLG-IGIF working groups. UN-GGIM Arab States have established an IGIF working group and are currently providing representation on all three of the HLG-IGIF working groups. They will be working to translate the IGIF Implementation Guide and associated tools and materials into Arabic to aid with implementation at the regional level. UN-GGIM: Americas, in collaboration with the Secretariat and the HLG-IGIF, are conducting a series of IGIF Virtual Webinars, the first of which is entitled “Why implement the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) in my country?” The first webinar was convened on 7 July 2022. In addition, Germany and Italy will host an IGIF event in the fall of 2022 for North African Member States.

V. Mobilize sustainable funding

39. At its eleventh session, the Committee of Experts noted the need for clear mechanisms to provide adequate resources to support the implementation of the IGIF in developing countries, to develop national Country-level Action Plans that could be effectively

operationalized and, with a view to having a significant impact for geospatially enabled e-services, embarking on a path towards digital transformation and to bridge the geospatial digital divide.

40. The efforts to mobilize resources and sustainable funding for Member States to operationalize IGIF has achieved some success with World Bank support, some bi-lateral funding, and most recently the SDG Data Alliance – a partnership between the United Nations and philanthropic and business partners. The HLG and Secretariat will continue to build on these successes to mobilize sustainable funding to help developing countries to effectively operationalize the IGIF.

41. The Sustainable Funding working group is meeting with partners to determine how best to continue to build on our successes. However, there are significant resource issues that are recognized, and which need to be addressed. The Sustainable Funding working group is seeking additional members from the Committee of Experts that have expertise in this area. They are also drawing on outside partners to share their expertise with the group and to develop a list of possible funding sources that can provide the needed resources for developing countries to implement the IGIF.

VI. Implementing the IGIF at the country-level

42. The Country-level Action Plan addresses each of the nine strategic pathways and prioritizes activities and actions while considering the strategic and operational needs, circumstances, and capacities of a country. It is a ‘requirements document’ that serves as a ‘roadmap’ for implementing what is needed for improving or strengthening national geospatial information management arrangements. A number of countries have now started the process of developing and implementing Country-level Action Plans utilizing the Overarching Strategic Framework, Implementation Guide, and related resource materials. The two larger IGIF group projects are discussed below in turn. It is important to note that other countries (both developing and developed) are now beginning to utilize the resource materials, tools and training developed for these larger projects and are developing their own Country-level Action Plans and implementing the IGIF on their own.

United Nations Development Account 11th tranche Project 1819D

43. The United Nations Development Account 11th tranche Project 1819D is focused on improving and strengthening nationally integrated geospatial information management arrangements and capacities in six countries⁷. The six countries utilized a ‘self-paced, learn and discover’ capacity development approach that considers existing arrangements, and results in the development of new capacities and capabilities critical for implementing the IGIF. All six countries are now in the process of finalizing their Action Plans, having methodologically analyzed and assessed their national needs and gaps based on national circumstances and applying the nine strategic pathways. Implementations have begun through a series of national stakeholder workshops. This project and partnership with countries tested the concepts provided in the Implementation Guide and yielded a wealth of experience and understanding to further refine the IGIF Implementation Guide. This process has proven that there is more to learn and that the Guide is a living document which will continue to evolve over time.

⁷ Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Fiji, Mongolia, Nepal, and Kingdom of Tonga

SDG Data Alliance

44. UNSD, as Secretariat for the Committee of Experts, in partnership with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Esri, Chia Network, and the PVBLIC Foundation, has established the SDG Data Alliance to support national geospatial information agencies to better coordinate and realize their data needs and requirements for achieving the SDGs according to their national priorities and circumstances. The Alliance utilizes the IGIF guidance and tools and is supported by Esri enabling technologies to develop data hubs that will assist developing countries to measure, monitor, and report their progress toward achievement of the SDGs, and in particular progress against Goal 10 - Reducing Inequality, to empower Member States to ensure inclusiveness and equality.

45. The SDG Data Alliance is striving to accelerate achievement of the SDGs made possible by advances on individual IGIF Country-level Action Plans for developing nations throughout Latin America, Asia, and Africa, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Morocco, Mozambique, Panama, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tonga, and Tunisia. The countries are each working their way through their Country-level Action Plans with varying levels of progress that reflect their unique circumstances. The former UN Development Account 11th tranche Project 1819D participants (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Fiji, and Tonga) are either finished or very close to finishing their Country-level Action Plans. The remaining countries are relatively new to the IGIF and their Country-level Action Plan development and generally are making very good progress. Many of the countries have begun initial efforts at developing an SDG Data Hub based on Esri technology and support.

46. In order to increase initial efforts, understanding and momentum as described above, PVBLIC Foundation conducted SDG Data Alliance-IGIF Workshops and Events for the participating developing countries at the Esri User Conference 9 – 15 July 2022, which included an IGIF Special Interest Group meeting as an information session for participants at the User Conference. In addition, the HLG-IGIF will be convening an IGIF side event at this twelfth session of the Committee of Experts, and plans are underway for an IGIF side event at the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress in Hyderabad, India in October.

VII. Issues and next steps

47. At the most recent virtual meeting of the HLG-IGIF on 28 June 2022, the HLG discussed progress against the HLG-IGIF Plan of Work, which is provided as a background document for the Committee of Experts. Working groups have been established for each of the three priority goals and each group has met at least twice since the formation of working groups at the first in-person plenary meeting in April 2022.

48. In the meeting, it was noted that communication across working groups will be important to identify areas where groups can work together on tasks and activities and to avoid possible duplication of efforts. Increased participation and representation on all three working groups is necessary to support the ambitious Plan of Work, and plans were discussed to take advantage of opportunities at the twelfth session of the Committee of Experts and the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) in Hyderabad, India 10 – 14 October 2022, to engage others in the HLG-IGIF working groups.

49. The Plan of Work also needs to be anchored with the regional committees of UN-GGIM to contribute, combine and coordinate the work in the most effective and efficient way. Some regions have greater representation than others in the HLG-IGIF working groups,

and not all regions are represented on each of the three working groups. The HLG-IGIF will continue to promote the sharing of ideas and regional work in support of the IGIF across all regional committees. The twelfth session of the Committee of Experts and the UNWGIC will be utilized to share progress against the Plan of Work and to promote and spread ideas and experiences across all regions.

Finalizing the IGIF Implementation Guide

50. As mentioned in paragraph 30 above, attention and resources need to be directed to finalizing the Implementation Guide. This is necessary for the IGIF itself, to be fully implementable and successful. The Implementation Guide is the foundation for the rest of the future work of the HLG and is the most critical cog in the IGIF suite of products and resources.

51. As was reported to the Committee of Experts at its eleventh session⁸, the IGIF represents a considerable achievement and an even larger body of work. In this regard, there has been immense recognition and support of the IGIF from Member States and the global geospatial community. However, it was also recognized that the development of the IGIF represents an enormous task which is presently under-resourced. While the HLG-IGIF Capacity Development working group can assist with some editing and final review, the burden of finalizing the remaining four chapters of the Implementation Guide will primarily fall on a small group within the Secretariat who has considerably greater knowledge, gained through the global consultation process and country-level implementation experiences, on the necessary changes to finalize the Implementation Guide.

52. While there is broad global consensus, support, and agreement on the critical importance of the IGIF and its Implementation Guide, the resources required to maintain and sustain it were quite simply inadequate then – and remain so today. In making decision 10/103, the Committee of Experts adopted the IGIF Implementation Guide, subject to further refinement and finalization. Two years later, this is still a primary focus, and therefore, a high priority for the HLG-IGIF is the refinement, finalization, and digital publication of the IGIF Implementation Guide, and update of the IGIF Overarching Strategic Framework.

Interlinkages with the IGIF

53. Further, as time has passed, the above shortcoming in the finalization of the Implementation Guide is now being compounded by growing expectation and demand by our global geospatial community, as has been described in this present report and other reports before the Committee at this twelfth session. As a Framework for all countries, the IGIF is taking a globally prominent role. It is being implemented in many Member States and referenced in national geospatial policies and strategies, including by development partners such as the World Bank, FAO and the SDG Data Alliance, as a tangible means to create an enabling environment where national governments can coordinate, develop, strengthen, and promote the efficient and effective use and sharing of geospatial information for policy formulation, decision-making, and innovation. The IGIF is also embedded across all the work areas of the Committee of Experts, as can be observed separately in other reports provided to this twelfth session.

54. While still a ‘work in progress,’ the IGIF, as an integrated Framework, is a new mechanism to strengthen nationally integrated geospatial information management and the

⁸ E/C.20/2020/25/Add.1 https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/10th-Session/documents/E-C.20-2020-25-Add_1-Integrated-Geospatial-Information-Framework-7Aug2020.pdf

desired transformational change that is required for countries and the global geospatial community. The strategic leadership, governance, guidance, and championing at this foundational phase of the IGIF are crucial, the steps and decisions taken collectively by the HLG-IGIF will have profound impacts on all countries, particularly developing countries as the Member States strongly support the work in words and actions. That said, the IGIF fundamentally, and critically, needs to be adequately resourced.

VIII. Points for discussion

55. The Committee of Experts is invited to:

- (a) Take note of the present report, express its views, and provide guidance on the activities and progress of the HLG-IGIF since its establishment;**
- (b) Express its views on the Plan of Work for the HLG-IGIF and provide guidance on expanded participation and engagement in the three HLG-IGIF working groups;**
- (c) Provide input, guidance, and support to resource the refinement, finalization, translation, and digital publication of the IGIF suite of documents, including the Overarching Strategic Framework, the Implementation Guide, and tools and resource materials to assess, design and develop Country-level Action Plans – especially given the importance and urgency of this matter;**
- (d) Provide further guidance towards resources to adequately sustain and continue to refine, as an ongoing and iterative process, the IGIF and its suite of documents for Member States and the global geospatial community;**
- (e) Provide any further guidance regarding the way forward for Member States to implement the IGIF: as a forward-looking framework at the country-level; across the work areas of the Committee of Experts and pertaining to data domains; its interlinkages with other regional to global frameworks; and its continued adoption in response to increasingly challenging national, regional, and global demands.**