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## Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

### Twelfth session

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Item 14 of the provisional agenda\*

### Policy and legal frameworks, including issues related to authoritative data

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### Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to bring to the attention of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management the report prepared by the working group on policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information management, which will be available in the language of submission only from the relevant web page of the Committee of Experts (<https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/12th-session/>). The Committee is invited to take note of the report and to express its views on the progress made by the working group in its efforts to address policy and legal issues in geospatial information management, including issues related to authoritative data.

### Summary of the report

At its eleventh session, held virtually on 23, 24 and 27 August 2021, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 11/110, in which it commended the progress made, under the leadership of Sweden and Australia, in updating the workplan of the working group for the period 2020–2022, thereby supporting the working group's transition from hypothetical to real-world policy and legal situations. This involved initiating the drafting of one paper on authoritative data, authority and custodianship and another on exploring geospatial data for public good, ethical use and new technologies, including with regard to issues of privacy and confidentiality.

The Committee of Experts expressed its awareness that policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information management within and across Member States were a complex mixture of interlinked issues in which established legal systems and jurisdictions were diverse and at different levels of maturity, presenting a challenging and important area of work for the Committee and for the implementation of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, and noted the importance of

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\* [E/C.20/2022/1](https://www.un.org/Depts/under20/2022/1/).



effectively communicating and raising awareness of these issues to policymakers and decision-makers, relevant stakeholders and the general public.

The Committee of Experts requested that the working group continue its consideration of the policy and legal settings impacting privacy, national security, commercial-in-confidence concerns, authority, diversity of geospatial information sources, liability and multiplicity of use, all while recognizing that policymakers and decision-makers seek trust, timeliness and fitness for purpose in geospatial information, and in this regard highlighting the importance of maintaining trust in geospatial information for evidence-based policies and decisions. The Committee encouraged the working group to continue its consideration of policy and legal issues related to authoritative data and public good, noting that defining authoritative data could be complex and challenging, with differing national circumstances, and that the production of geospatial information and services were no longer exclusive to nationally mandated agencies owing to the changing digital and technological landscape, diversity and innovative use of geospatial information. The Committee also encouraged the working group to collaborate with relevant international organizations on these matters.

The Committee of Experts welcomed the progress in developing and preparing a policy and legal resource kit to support Member States in improving data sharing and exchange, noting that these resources were foundational for implementing the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework with appropriate national-level policy and legal frameworks, and encouraged continued collaboration with functional groups and regional committees of the Committee to gain a greater understanding of policy and legal factors and implications and to advance the implementation of the Framework at the country level.

In the report, the working group provides information on its progress and activities, including an update of its workplan and its efforts to address complex policy and legal issues in geospatial information management and to support the implementation of the Framework. It also indicates its progress in developing a paper on authoritative data, authority and custodianship. In this regard, the working group has welcomed a diverse range of initial perspectives from geospatial practitioners and policy and legal experts around the world. The working group is seeking to develop and establish a framework to enable a better understanding of the various ways in which the “authoritative” designation has been employed.

Furthermore, the working group discusses its progress on the paper on geospatial data for public good, ethical use and related issues on privacy, confidentiality and new technologies. The report also contains a discussion of the development of a policy and legal resource kit to support Member States in improving data sharing and exchange, and it is noted that these resources are foundational for implementing the Framework with appropriate national-level policy and legal frameworks. The resource kit comprises three documents intended to serve as a resource for reference or guidance as countries begin to operationalize the Framework with their country-level action plans. The aim was to put the goals and objectives of the Framework into language that is familiar to the policy and legal communities. It is stipulated under the “Strategic pathway 2: policy and legal” of the Framework that a successful policy and legal framework consists of a number of instruments that are necessary to address the wide range of policy and legal issues that affect the collection, use storage and distribution of geospatial information.

Lastly, it is indicated in the report that the working group is continuing work to develop a communication plan designed to encourage dialogue and engagement between the Committee of Experts and policy and legal professionals.