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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 twelfth session, held from 3 to 5 August 2022, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 12/103, in which it commended the five United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees on their work and achievements during the intersessional period, including their efforts to share knowledge and experiences, to strengthen national initiatives on geospatial information management and deepen collaboration across regional committees to further Member States' abilities to leverage the benefits of geospatial information for sustainable development, and to support evidence-based decision-making to meet local and global challenges, in particular for post-pandemic recovery effort. The Committee noted the strategies and workplans prepared by the regional committees for the Americas and Europe, which had aligned their structures and programmes of work to the global agenda while addressing regional geospatial needs and requirements, and welcomed the preparation of publications, the development of data dissemination platforms, e-learning courses and technical workshops conducted to strengthen geospatial capacities of Member States. Also noted were the challenges being experienced by regional committees to provide the resources and capacity to support national mapping/geospatial agencies, in particular in Africa, to be agile and dynamic in responding to technological change, to remain relevant, and not be left behind.

In this present report, information is provided on the intersessional activities and achievements of the 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. In highlighting the main achievements of the five regional committees, the report provides information on the main subjects addressed by the committees' working groups, capacity-building initiatives and actions taken to support Member States during the intersessional period, and provides the proposed dates of the next plenary meetings of the regional committees.

The report also contains information on the main decisions adopted at the plenary meetings of the regional committees and the actions taken to ensure that their programmes of work 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. Also examined are some of the major challenges faced by the regional committees and the strategies and programmes planned or adopted to address them.

I. Introduction

1. At its twelfth session, held from 3 to 5 August 2022, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 12/103, in which it commended the five United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees on their work and achievements during the intersessional period, including their efforts to share knowledge and experiences, to strengthen national initiatives on geospatial information management and deepen collaboration across regional committees to further Member States' abilities to leverage the benefits of geospatial information for sustainable development, and to support evidence-based decision-making to meet local and global challenges, in particular for post-pandemic recovery effort. The Committee noted the strategies and workplans prepared by the regional committees for the Americas and Europe, which had aligned their structures and programmes of work to the global agenda while addressing regional geospatial needs and requirements, and welcomed the preparation of publications, the development of data dissemination platforms, e-learning courses and technical workshops conducted to strengthen geospatial capacities of Member States. Also noted were the challenges being experienced by regional committees to provide the resources and capacity to support national mapping/geospatial agencies, in particular in Africa, to be agile and dynamic in responding to technological change, to remain relevant, and not be left behind.

2. Each UN-GGIM regional committee plays a vital role liaising with the 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 should know and understand their geospatial information management requirements and support the implementation of fit for purpose solutions.

3. For this reporting period, the regional committees continued to implement their regional geospatial information management work programmes and contributed to the activities of the Committee of Experts. There has been a continued emphasis on developing capacities and capabilities, strengthening coordination and coherence in geospatial collaborative activities across UN-GGIM regional committees, and alignment to the global work programme of the Committee of Experts. Regional committees also continued to prioritize the adoption and effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF), with emphasis on the preparation of Country-level Action Plans. For example, the regional committee for Asia and the Pacific has established a new working group on the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework during its plenary meeting in October 2022.

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. The Committee is invited to take note of this report, the supporting background documents, and the items for noting at paragraph 18.

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. For the reporting period all annual meetings were held in person, as COVID-19 travel restrictions were relaxed.

Regional Committees	Dates of Last Annual Meeting	Mode and Host
Asia and the Pacific	11 th Plenary, 14 Oct. 2022	In person in Hyderabad, India hosted by Survey of India
Americas	9 th Session, 28-30 Nov. 2022	In person in Santiago, Chile. Hosted by ECLAC
Africa	8 th Session, 24-28 Oct. 2022	In person in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, hosted by ECA
Europe	9 th Plenary, 20-21 June 2022	In person in UNECE, Geneva
Arab States	10 th Plenary, 14-16 Feb. 2023	In person in Abu Dhabi, host by United Arab Emirates

Table 1: UN-GGIM Regional Committee Annual Meetings 2022-2023

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.

Regional Committees	Total Member States	No. Attendees and Member States, 2021-2022 Plenaries		No. Attendees and Member States, 2022-2023 Plenaries		Change in No. Attendees and Member States	
		Attendees	Member States	Attendees	Member States	Attendees	Member States
Asia and the Pacific	56	109	21 (37%)	45	17 (30%)	-64	-4
Americas	36	175	28 (78%)	101	22 (61%)	-74	-6
Africa	54	80	27 (50%)	100	38 (70%)	+20	+11
Europe	56	110	35 (62%)	56	24 (43%)	-54	-11
Arab States	22	59	13 (59%)	43	12 (55%)	-16	-1

Table 2: Number of attendees and Member States participated in 2021-2022 Regional Committee Plenaries

(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.)

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. Based on the figures provided it appears that for the reporting period all regional committees met the requirements to convene legally constituted annual meetings. It is to be noted that the UN-GGIM Regional Committee for Asia Pacific is the only region reporting less than 50% of its Member States in attendance at the annual meeting. This has been due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions and financial constraints of many members.

9. Given the lifting of COVID-19 travel restrictions and all regional committees convening in person meetings, there was a marked decrease in the number of attendees at all regional committees' annual meetings, with the exception of UN-GGIM Africa. This region had 70% of its members in attendance, this was an increase of 20 participants and 11 Member States as compared with its eighth session numbers. The increase in participation can be attributed to the regional committee's meeting being held concurrently with the eighth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa.

10. Regional committees have begun to adopt the approach of scheduling their plenary meetings with other related geospatial or statistical events. This has proved to be advantageous in terms of cost savings, efficiencies in meeting management for Member States and the hosts, and importantly, strengthens the knowledge exchange and collaboration across professional disciplines. For example, (i) the regional committee for Africa eighth plenary meeting was held in conjunction with the eighth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa in October 2022, (ii) Europe's ninth plenary meeting was held in conjunction with the 70th session of the Conference of European Statisticians and intends to convene its eleventh plenary meeting in 2024 in conjunction with the 72nd session of the Conference of European Statisticians, and (iii) the eleventh plenary meeting of the regional committee for Asia and the Pacific was convened in conjunction with the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) which was held in Hyderabad, India in October 2022.

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

12. Table 3 shows the regional committee's proposed annual meetings for 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	12 th Plenary, 6-9 November 2023	In person, Bali Indonesia, hosted by (Badan Informasi Geospasial) BIG
Americas	10 th Session, 18-20 October 2023	In person, Santiago Chile, hosted by ECLAC
Africa	9 th Meeting, 14-18 August 2023	In person. Cape Town, South Africa in conjunction with the 31 st International Cartographic Conference
Europe	10 th Plenary, 22-23 November 2023	In person, Brussels, Belgium Sponsored by Eurostat
Arab States	11 th Plenary, February 2024	In person, location is to be determined.

Table 3 UN-GGIM Regional Committee Proposed Annual Meetings 2023

B. Administrative arrangements

13. There were very few changes in administrative arrangements across the UN-GGIM regional committees during the intersessional period. Existing administrative practices remained in place, with executive board member changes as per term limits as stated in their statutes. The following actions were taken: (i) The regional committee for Africa decided to review the composition, operation and mandates of its executive working groups, to propose a new structure and new terms of reference; (ii) The Executive Committee for the Regional Committee of Europe was elected at its ninth regional plenary; (iii) The Asia Pacific regional committee elected a new President and Executive Board for the term 2022-2025 and developed the terms of reference for its Executive Board to identify regional issues relevant to geospatial information management and necessary actions to be taken during 2022-2025; and (iv) UN-GGIM Arab States postponed the election of members of their executive committee and chairs of working groups for one year.

C. Regional Committee Work Programmes

14. The work programmes of 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 themes and standards				X	X
iii. Disasters	X	X			
iv. Integrated Geospatial Information Framework	X	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			X	
ix. Data strategy and policy				X	

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

15. The work programmes of the regional committees remained consistent within the intersessional period: (i) UN-GGIM Asia Pacific retained its three working groups and established a fourth in support of implementing the UN-IGIF. The regional committee also reconfirmed commitments to further advance international and regional agendas in support of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development, the UN-IGIF, and the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF); (ii) UN-GGIM Americas continued with the implementation of its strategic vision and work plan 2021 to 2025, ensuring that the activities are more aligned to the Committee of Expert's existing global frameworks. The regional committee's activities are executed by the ongoing work of its existing four working groups, its four regional vocals and thematic and private sector networks; (iii) UN-GGIM Africa's work is built around seven pillars which includes supporting the implementation of the UN-IGIF, and the integration of geospatial and statistical information, among other areas of work; (iv) UN-GGIM Europe continued with the implementation of their 2022 to 2025 work plan and the five priority areas of work; and (v) 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.

Regional committee	Work areas and activities
Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus building: organization of regional meetings and a workshop on geospatial value and integration. • Executive Working Groups; Assessment and review of their previous performance (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats); the revamping of their structure; and realignment of their scope and targets to comply with current trends at global and regional levels. • Knowledge generation: Designing the strategic pathways for the sustainable modernization of the national mapping systems in Africa. The strategy outlines the decisive steps for revamping

<i>Regional committee</i>	<i>Work areas and activities</i>
	<p>African national mapping agencies to become more agile and more responsive to technological and societal needs, while staying relevant and successful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity development: Organization of national training workshops to strengthen the capacities of selected national statistical offices in the management of their geospatial data and in the development of geocoding scheme for the spatial analysis of their population and housing censuses data.
Americas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued with the implementation of its Workplan 2021–2025. • The working groups: 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 focused on executing actions items. Working Group on Geodetic Reference Frame conducted three learning events and participated in two international events. • Regional collaboration included pursuing collaborative activities with: ECLAC, implementing the Aguascalientes Declaration, the Digital Earth Americas project, the Caribbean Geospatial Development Initiative, and the VGI Geographical Names Project. • The Academic Network and the Private Sector Network continued to support the work of the Americas.
Arab States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convened UN-IGIF workshop to support the design and development of country level action plans. • Approved work plans for the four working groups featuring the following areas, the UN-IGIF, fundamental geospatial data and building geospatial portals, the global geodetic reference frame and the global statistical geospatial framework. • Strengthened cooperation with and between the UN-GGIM Arab States Academic Network and the Private Sector Network to support the regional committee’s work. • Plans to empower Arab women in the field of geospatial information management
Asia and the Pacific	<p>Through their working groups, the following work areas are being supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development and maintenance of the regional geodetic reference frame including data-sharing and technical capacity development through four projects. • Raising awareness on the importance and pertinence of land and its administration and management in support of the sustainable development goals.

<i>Regional committee</i>	<i>Work areas and activities</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A three-year plan is being prepared with proposals to conduct webinars to discuss the feasibility of the plan and options for implementation. • A new working group created with the plan to advance the implementation and raise awareness of the UN-IGIF.
Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begun to implement its regional strategy and workplan, focused on five key priorities: - data integration, sustainable development goals, the UN-IGIF, the geodetic reference frame, and data strategy and policy. • Workplan focused on five key priority areas: the UN-IGIF, the geodetic reference frame, data integration, the Sustainable Development Goals, and data strategy and policy. • Continued collaborative interventions among 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 are being implemented in a practical context, as the bases for the data model for the Open Maps for Europe 2 (OME2) project currently underway.

Concluding remarks from UN-GGIM Regional Committees

16. The regional committees have shared their work and have also confirmed their commitment to ensure alignment and continued support to advance the work of the Committee of Experts. The following are some of the ideals and priorities shared.

- (a) To continue to build awareness and capacities of their Member States, to strengthen the management of geospatial information management through the implementation of the UN-GGIM global frameworks and guidelines, to remain fit for purpose and to leave no one behind.
- (b) Calls upon Member States to continue providing technical, human, and financial support and also contribute to the discussions and use the platforms and opportunities provided through the United Nations to improve the availability and use of geospatial information.
- (c) Remains focused on regional priorities and to strengthen regional capacities through inter-agency and international cooperation, making use of technology and innovation.
- (d) Recognizes the value of collaboration and partnerships in advancing regional and global work programmes and will continue to build relations and share knowledge, experiences, tools and technical experience among the five regional committees.

17. The annual reports of all five regional committees of UN-GGIM are provided as background documents to this present report.

III. Points for noting

- 18. The Committee of Experts is invited to:**
 - (a) Note the present report and background documents provided by the five regional committees of UN-GGIM;**
 - (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 Member State representatives to attend the plenary meetings; and**
 - (c) Recognizing that no Member States should be left behind, encourage all Member States to continue contributing to, and to take advantage of, the possibilities offered by the Committee of Experts to discuss, coordinate and improve the availability and use of geospatial information across all regions.**