



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 May 2023

Original: English

Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Thirteenth session

New York, 2–4 August 2023

Item 14 of the provisional agenda*

Policy and legal frameworks, including issues related to authoritative data

Policy and legal frameworks, including issues related to authoritative data

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 (<https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/13th-session/>). The Committee is invited to take note of the report, and to express its views on the working group's progress in addressing policy and legal issues in geospatial information management, including issues related to authoritative data and data for public good.

Summary of the report

At its twelfth session, held from 3 to 5 August 2022, the Committee adopted decision 12/112, in which it commended the working group on its progress and the successful leadership transition. The Committee noted the continuing efforts of the working group to align its workplan and activities with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework through the completion of the policy and legal resource kit, which includes model legal instruments (including an agreement, a policy and legislation) to which Member States could refer and, where appropriate, adapt and tailor to their national circumstances when implementing the Framework and improving data sharing and exchange at the country level.

The Committee noted the progress in addressing the issue of authoritative data, authority and custodianship by exploring the various ways that authoritativeness had been described and applied, domain-specific understandings and applications of authoritative data, and policy and legal considerations for developing national authoritative data governance frameworks that respect unique national legal systems and circumstances. The Committee also appreciated the working group's

* E/C.20/2023/1.



consideration of the use of geospatial data in its activities and noted that the data ethics landscape was becoming complex.

The Committee recognized that the policy and legal issues that relate to the availability, accessibility and application of geospatial information are complex, and welcomed the working group's continuing consideration of feasible solutions to real-world problems and the need for effective policy and legal frameworks that ensure lawful, transparent and real-world solutions in order to create preconditions for trust in the new digital era that characterizes our world today.

In the report, the working group provides information on its progress and activities, including its progress in developing, through a collaborative and inclusive process, the draft paper entitled "Authoritative data in an evolving geospatial landscape: an exploration of policy and legal challenges". Building on its efforts and progress in previous intersessional periods, the working group, in the draft paper, addresses issues related to authoritative data, authority and custodianship. The draft paper underwent a series of reviews within the working group and consultation with relevant functional groups of the Committee, before being subjected to a broad global consultation process involving Member States and relevant stakeholders. In the draft paper, the working group explores the different ways in which authoritativeness is understood and used in different geospatial domains. Traditionally, many jurisdictions have recognized national mapping, cadastral and land registration authorities as official sources of legal and administrative geospatial information. Some domains have well-established legal traditions and robust frameworks governing authoritative data. In other domains, the designation of authoritative data lacks the same rich legal tradition and is thus less entrenched in law. The draft paper is intended as a policy and legal guide to help geospatially enabled government entities, including national mapping, cadastral and land registration authorities, as well as the private sector and civil society, to better produce, and sustain and govern the usage of, geospatial information that is deemed authoritative. It can be used as a supplement to the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, specifically strategic pathway 2: policy and legal, strategic pathway 4: data, and strategic pathway 5: innovation, on matters relating to authority and authoritativeness. In the draft paper, the working group highlights the importance of authoritative data and the need to have strong, authoritative data governance frameworks nationally and globally. The draft paper is submitted to the Committee for its consideration and endorsement.

In the report, the working group also discusses its consideration of, and its progress in its proposed paper on, geospatial data for public good, ethical use, and related issues of privacy, confidentiality and new technologies. Recognizing that, in the view of the Committee, "ethical use of geospatial data" and "data for the public good" are separate concepts more commonly informed by guidance than legislation, while noting that a number of related frameworks and activities are under development, the working group proposes that its current efforts be refocused on geospatial data for public good and the drafting of a paper aimed at providing guidance to Member States on the basis of a review of the available case law.

In the report, the working group also discusses its review and updating of its workplan, its efforts to address complex policy and legal issues in geospatial information management, and its provision of support to the implementation of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework at the country level. In its updated workplan for 2023–2025, the working group seeks to continue its engagement activities, through which it has sought to encourage dialogue and rapport between the Committee and policy and legal professionals. The working group also proposes to continue its efforts to address the issue of authoritative data by considering fit-for-purpose authoritative data for crises, as an activity to follow up on the paper entitled "Authoritative data in an evolving geospatial landscape: an exploration of policy and legal challenges".