SEVENTH HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Mexico City, October 8-10, 2024

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The United Nations Statistics Division, as the secretariat of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), in collaboration with the Government of Mexico through the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) will convene the seventh High-level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management with the theme **"Accelerating Implementation: Achieving Resilience**" in Mexico City, Mexico from 8 to 10 October 2024. This seventh staging of the High-level Forum will continue the Committee of Experts' multi-stakeholder discussions on the fundamental relevance of global geospatial information management, aimed at fostering open and comprehensive dialogue among Member States, and between Member States and relevant international organisations, the UN system entities, private sector, academia, and other stakeholders.

The Committee of Experts, at its thirteenth session in August 2023, by decision 13/101, welcomed the invitation of the Government of Mexico, through INEGI, to host the seventh High-level Forum in Mexico City in October 2024. The decision also confirmed the support of the Committee of Experts in the development and implementation of the programme of the Forum, alongside the eleventh plenary meeting of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Regional Committee for the Americas. The preparation and promotion of the High-level Forum, including the identification of themes and speakers are being done by an advisory committee, whose members are representatives from the UN-GGIM's five regional committees, functional groups and thematic networks. This advisory committee is chaired by the host country representative who is also a co-Chair of the Committee of Experts.

Context

Since its creation, the Committee of Experts has actively worked to position geospatial information to effectively address global challenges, including issues such as climate and resilience, disaster risk management, and land and property rights. The Committee achieves this by strengthening the availability and accessibility of geospatial information to meet the evolving needs of global agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient

Prosperity, and the UN Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF). The UN-IGIF is a key framework, the 'umbrella' for many activities under the purview of the Committee of Experts. It is an overarching strategy and guide for countries to reference when developing and strengthening their national and sub-national geospatial information management systems and capabilities. UN-IGIF provides the basis and guide for developing, integrating and strengthening national geospatial information management arrangements across all sectors (such as environment, marine, cadastral, statistics, utilities, insurance, development, planning, security) bridging the geospatial digital divide, and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other global development agendas.

As the basis for understanding what is happening when, where, and why, geospatial information is crucial towards identifying how communities are, and could, be impacted by changing climate. With this knowledge, we can assess the impact of climate related challenges, determine losses and damages, or develop effective mitigation strategies. All these efforts are intrinsically tied to a geographic location. In this respect, geospatial information is key in assisting decision-makers particularly in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to make informed decisions that align with government priorities and support national resilience, adaptation, and mitigation policies. By harnessing the power of geospatial data, the resilience of communities can be enhanced, sustainability promoted, and foster more efficient and equitable societies.

Moreover, in its resolution 2022/24, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) reiterated the importance of strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of the Committee of Experts, particularly for the achievement of its operations focused on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, to strengthen and ensure its continued effectiveness and benefits to all Member States. In this regard, the staging of the seventh High-level Forum offers an opportunity to progress work program objectives, decisions and policy outcomes emanating from the formal inter-governmental sessions of the Committee of Experts and also contributes to the High-level Political Forum dialogue, stocktaking and agenda-setting to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Our changing climate and environment are increasing the fragility of the most vulnerable countries, making adaptation, mitigation, and resilience building more difficult. While strengthening climate resilience is essential for all countries, it is especially crucial for SIDS that are hampered by their unique vulnerability to exogenous shocks due to their small size, geographical remoteness, and undiversified nature of their economies. Annual economic losses due to climate-related disasters average two to three percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Building resilience to the impacts of changing climate is vital. Geospatial information frameworks, norms, principles, guides and practices are crucial resource that can be leveraged by all countries to strengthen their resilience.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies hold promise for advancing geospatial information management responsibly. The rapid progress, innovative applications, and increasing accessibility of high-quality, time and reliable geospatial information are critical for societal well-being, sustainable development, and effective climate action. Creating a collaborative environment that fosters shared knowledge and resources is essential for addressing humanity's complex challenges collectively, and for developing countries, leapfrogging into new development trajectories. With accelerating change in climate, expanding AI capabilities, and intensifying pursuit of the SDG's, the convergence of these areas presents both formidable challenges and unprecedented opportunities. The seventh High-level Forum

brings together governments, private sector, academia and other stakeholders to help to address these pressing challenges through harnessing the power of geospatial information and related technologies.

Expected Outcomes

The seventh High-level Forum presents a valuable opportunity for the global geospatial information community to come together with diverse stakeholders and focus on how geospatial information helps accelerate implementation as a means of achieving resilience. The forum aims to significantly enhance and strengthen national geospatial information management capacities across all countries, enabling evidence-based policy and decision-making for the 2030 Agenda. By bringing together all stakeholders, the Forum will offer Member States and geospatial stakeholders a unique platform to exchange new ideas, methods, and strategies, fostering local to global sustainable development through geospatial technology and innovation.

Objectives of the forum will be to discuss the integration of geospatial knowledge, platforms and services to facilitate informed decision making, empower decision makers to sustainably manage and develop the Earth's finite resources, drawing on the UN-IGIF and the report on 'Applying Geospatial Information to Climate Challenges'. This will better enable and encourage governments, the private sector, multilateral and international development organisations, academia and civil society to pursue sustainable development initiatives using geospatial knowledge and services. It is hoped that the High-level Forum will serve to highlight the importance of these geospatial information, technologies and services to decision makers thereby strengthening political awareness and uptake on the use of geospatial data, systems and products.

Venue

The seventh High-level Forum will be held at the Sheraton María lsabel Hotel, Mexico City, Mexico, and is located on the renowned Paseo de la Reforma Avenue 325, Col Cuauhtémoc, Mexico City 06500.

Language

The working language of the seventh High-level Forum is English. Simultaneous interpretation services will be provided in Spanish.

Provisional programme

The seventh High-level Forum will be over three days, from 8 to 10 October 2024. The programme is being developed by an advisory committee chaired by the host country representative who is also a co-Chair of the Committee of Experts. The objective is to design, create and promote a compelling substantive agenda, with high-level keynotes, plenary presentations, and panel discussions. Members of the advisory committee include: the host country, Mexico; the convenors of the Task Team on Geospatial Information for Climate Resilience (Barbados, Tonga and the United Kingdom); chairs of thematic networks (Geospatial Societies, Academic Network, Private Sector Network, and UN Geospatial Network); and representatives of regional committees. The draft programme 'at a glance' is shown in the figure below:

Day 1 - Tuesday 8 October:

"Accelerating implementation for the 2030 Agenda and Beyond"

With the theme "Accelerating implementation for the 2030 Agenda and Beyond", Day 1 will focus on what is being done to implement the UN-IGIF in supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1. **Accelerating implementation with the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework**

The UN-IGIF offers a comprehensive strategy to implement and leverage geospatial information to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN-IGIF is anchored by three main areas of influence:

governance, technology, and people. By enhancing governance, leveraging technology, and involving people, from policymakers to local communities, the UN-IGIF guides governments towards implementing integrated geospatial information systems in a way that will accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This session will provide practical examples of Member States utilizing the UN-IGIF to deliver sustainable social, economic, and environmental development.

2. Barriers to implementation - preparing for the future

This session will address the various barriers and gaps that hinder the implementation of the UN-IGIF. Through interactive and participatory discussion, this session will explore these barriers and share strategies for overcoming them. Attendees will engage in discussions on policy development, capacity building, and innovative solutions to ensure that geospatial information systems are resilient and adaptable to future needs. This session aims to equip participants with knowledge of the resources, paradigms, and insights necessary to navigate and mitigate barriers for implementing the UN-IGIF, fostering a collaborative environment for sustainable and effective geospatial information implementation.

Day 2 - Wednesday 9 October:

"Achieving a resilient planet with geospatial information"

With the theme "Achieving a resilient planet with geospatial information", Day 2 delves into the critical role of geospatial information in developing resilience against climate variabilities, disasters, and other global challenges. The discussions will showcase the paper on '*Applying Geospatial Information to Climate Challenges'*, emphasize the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships, the integration of geospatial information into national and global resilience strategies, and highlight the transformative potential of geospatial intelligence to support a resilient and sustainable planet.

3. Understanding and communicating climate risk using geospatial data

This session will explore the critical role of geospatial data in understanding and communicating climate risk and the report on 'Applying Geospatial Information to Climate Challenges'. Issues to be considered include how geospatial data can be used to map climate hazards, monitor environmental changes, and support decision-making processes. Participants will gain insights into good practices for integrating geospatial information into climate risk assessments and how to effectively communicate these risks to foster informed action and resilience. The session aims to promote a deeper understanding of climate risks through geospatial data and enhance collaboration among stakeholders to build a more resilient and sustainable future.

4. Geospatial information for climate planning and decision-making

This session will focus on the vital role of geospatial information in climate planning and decision-making, with a particular emphasis on protecting coastal and marine environments and implementing nature-based solutions as two interlinked, but separate, segments:

Protecting Our Coasts and Oceans Using Geospatial Information: This segment will highlight how geospatial data and technologies are essential for managing and safeguarding our coastlines and

oceans. Experts will discuss applications such as coastal mapping, monitoring marine ecosystems, and predicting sea-level rise and its impacts. By showcasing successful case studies, participants will learn how geospatial information can guide policy development and operational strategies to protect coastal communities and marine biodiversity.

Using Geospatial Information to Deliver Nature-Based Solutions: The second part of the session will explore how geospatial information supports the implementation of nature-based solutions for climate resilience. Speakers will present examples of integrating geospatial data into projects that leverage natural processes to address climate challenges, such as reforestation, wetland restoration, and urban green spaces. This segment will emphasize the benefits of nature-based solutions in enhancing ecosystem services, reducing carbon footprints, and improving community resilience.

5. Geospatial capacity development, tools and partnerships to improve climate resilience

This session will explore the essential aspects of building geospatial capacity, developing advanced tools, and fostering partnerships to enhance climate resilience. As the impacts of climate change intensify, there is an urgent need to strengthen the capabilities of countries and organisations to effectively utilize geospatial information in their climate resilience strategies.

Day 3 - Thursday 10 October:

"Building a sustainable future: Innovation, Technology and AI"

With the theme "Building a sustainable future: Innovation, Technology and AI", the final day will feature the future of geospatial information management, focusing on innovation, technology, and artificial intelligence (AI), and will exploring the latest advancements in geospatial technologies and their implications for sustainable development.

6. The future geospatial information ecosystem

The global geospatial information community is at a critical juncture, where it must be prepared to adapt to the rapidly changing landscape of geospatial information management and its future operating environment. With an increasingly data-driven world, interfacing with technologies such as machine learning, drones, Internet-Of-Things, digital worlds, and AI, it is essential to consider the role of geospatial information management in adapting to and contributing to the wider ecosystem. These considerations will help strengthen the role of the geospatial information ecosystem to deliver on current and future global development agendas, provide insights to address national priorities, and bridge the growing digital divide. This session will explore the multifaceted nature of the future geospatial information ecosystem, focusing on the nexus of policies, actors, users, standards, and practices that collectively shape its evolution. The session aims to help identify opportunities and critical foundational elements needed to adapt, contribute, and be prepared for the effective utilization of geospatial information in the wider digital ecosystem.

7. The rise of AI, Big Data, and data analytics: The digital infrastructure of the future

This session will explore the transformative impact of AI, big data, and data analytics on the future of digital infrastructure. These technologies are becoming essential tools for managing and leveraging vast amounts of geospatial information to address complex global challenges. Overall, this session aims to equip participants with a comprehensive understanding of how geospatially enabled AI, big data, and data analytics are shaping the digital infrastructure of the future. By fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration, the session will inspire innovative approaches to leveraging these technologies for a resilient and sustainable future.