Economic and Social Council

16 July 2024

Committee of Experts on
Global Geospatial Information Management
Fourteenth session
New York, 7–9 August 2024
Item 11 of the provisional agenda*
Integration of geospatial, statistical and other related information

Integration of geospatial, statistical and other related information

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its thirteenth session, held in New York from 2 to 4 August 2023, the Committee of Experts adopted Decision 13/108, in which it, inter alia, urged Member States to continue to implement and operationalize the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework as a tool for attaining geospatially enabled statistical data for the 2030 Agenda and recognized that addressing the many data integration challenges presented by complex issues such as climate change and disaster resilience required the full implementation of the Framework at the national and regional levels. The Committee welcomed the Expert Group's new strategic direction, to be focused on strengthening interlinkages between the statistical and geospatial communities and, in that regard, urged the Expert Group to strengthen its collaboration with the regional committees of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management and regional commissions of the United Nations and other relevant regional stakeholders, for the establishment of coherent layers of guidance from the global, to the regional, to the national level. The Committee also acknowledged the assessment by the Expert Group that the substantive completion of the 2020 round of censuses had provided new insights into the ongoing implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework by Member States and further underscored the importance of leveraging the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework as a key enabling framework for that effort, and the further refinement and strengthening of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework through the addition of guidance on statistical grids, common geographies, user-defined geographic units and other topical issues.

In this present report, the Expert Group provides information on its recent activities, including how it has made progress against its workplan for the period 2022–2024, including the development of the paper on the "Benefits of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework for the statistical domain"; the current progress, and future plans, for the revision of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework; and the development and operationalization of the self-assessment tool for the Framework.

This report also highlights the Expert Group's efforts to strengthen institutional relationships between national statistical offices and national geospatial information agencies through advancing an outline memorandum of agreement to highlight opportunities for collaboration; its work with the Data for Now initiative of the Statistics Division to advance the operationalization and implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework by aligning existing capacity development initiatives and mobilizing resources to promote geostatistical integration initiatives;

---

* *[E/C.20/2024/1](E/C.20/2024/1).

and how it has worked to deepen geostatistical integration work with the statistical community, including by supporting the process for revising the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, and collaborating with the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics to develop guidelines to assist countries in integrating geospatial information into statistical business registers. The Expert Group also highlights efforts to help strengthen regional coordination across both regional committees of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and regional commissions of the United Nations.

This report provides information to the Committee of Experts on the Expert Group's initial consideration of its own role within the evolving programme of work of the Committee and the Statistical Commission, along with consideration of the opportunities beyond the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, the Expert Group discusses the need to enhance the implementation and operationalization of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, aligned with the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, as a means of enabling access to geospatially integrated statistical data that is disaggregated at all levels of national geography, from the local to the regional, while ensuring inherent and necessary characteristics like privacy and confidentiality. The Expert Group will report on its preparations to convene its eighth meeting jointly with the working group on geospatial information of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

I. Introduction

1. The Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information is now well into its second decade of existence. In its first decade, the Expert Group focused on ensuring its work could contribute to the delivery of national priorities and global development agendas anchored by the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF). The GSGF has served as a crucial foundation for the integration of statistical and geospatial information at the national, regional, and global levels, enabling more accurate and comprehensive analyses for informed decision-making. It is underpinned by several related resources that support its implementation, including the Implementation Guide of the GSGF[1], the global survey on readiness to implement the GSGF[2] (undertaken in 2022) and the Self-Assessment Tool for the GSGF, which was developed and provided to the Statistical Commission during the intersessional period.

2. As the bridge between the statistical and geospatial communities, the Expert Group is mandated by the Statistical Commission, by its decision 48/108, to be the overall coordination group for all activities in the area of the integration of statistical and geospatial information. In this regard, in the intersessional period, the Expert Group has made significant progress in promoting the GSGF and geospatial information generally to the statistical community. By way of example, during its fifty-fifth session, the documents of the Statistical Commission contained over 830 references to geo-statistical integration in the reports and background documents across that session's nineteen agenda items. Furthermore, five side events during the session were directly related to geospatial information; three were directly organised by the Expert Group, and two were with the participation and representation of its members.

3. Despite this recognition by the statistical community, there remains significant work to be done to fully integrate geospatial information within the work of national statistical offices (NSOs) and raise awareness of the Expert Group's work among the functional groups of the Statistical Commission. However, this is not a 'one-way street'; as such, the Expert Group is actively considering methods of strengthening the interlinkages for the mutual benefit of the statistical and geospatial communities.

4. Economic and Social Council resolution[3] 2022/3, *inter alia*, emphasises the importance for Member States to build resilient, agile, relevant, responsive, and robust statistical and data systems adhering to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics that fully integrate geospatial information and to seek improved coordination across national statistical and data systems through an expanded role of the national statistical offices in the changing data landscape, where they are increasingly assigned data stewardship responsibilities in the national statistical and data systems.

5. At its thirteenth session, held in New York from 2 to 4 August 2023, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 13/108, in which it, *inter alia*, urged Member States to continue to implement and operationalise the GSGF as a tool for attaining geospatially enabled statistical data for the 2030 Agenda and recognised that addressing the many data integration challenges presented by complex issues such as climate change and disaster resilience required the full implementation of the GSGF at the national and regional levels. The Committee welcomed the Expert Group's new strategic direction, focused on strengthening interlinkages between the statistical and geospatial communities and, in that regard, urged the Expert Group to strengthen its

---

[1] see: ggim.un.org/documents/EG-ISGI-GSGF-Implementation-Guide-E.pdf
[2] See: https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_53/documents/BG-3x-EG-ISGI-Global-Survey-GSGF-Readiness-Analysis-E.pdf
[3] E/RES/2022/3 Ensuring that the work in the field of statistics and data is adaptive to the changing statistical and data ecosystem See: https://documents.un.org/api/symbol/access?s=E/RES/2022/3&l=en

collaboration with the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees, regional commissions of the United Nations and other relevant regional stakeholders, for the establishment of coherent layers of guidance from the global, to the regional, to the national level. The Committee underscored the importance of leveraging the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) as a key enabling framework for that effort and the further refinement and strengthening of the GSGF through the addition of guidance on statistical grids, common geographies, user-defined geographic units, and other topical issues.

6.   This present report details the recent activities of the Expert Group, as well as the main strategies to coordinate activities related to the integration of statistical and geospatial information in an increasingly complex data production ecosystem. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 40.

II.   Fifty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission

7.   At the fifty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission, convened in New York from 27 February to 1 March 2024, the report of the Expert Group[4] was presented as an item for information. However, the impact of geo-statistical integration was strongly present in the reports and decisions[5] of the Statistical Commission. In taking a landscape perspective of the various touch points of the integration of statistical and geospatial information in the Commission's programme of work, the Expert Group conducted a desk review of the presence of geospatial information and related terms in the session's reports and background documents. 830 references were found in nineteen different thematic domains. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the thematic areas and decisions of the Statistical Commission are related to, and can benefit from, the provision of geospatially integrated statistical data. Potential future work in this area includes considering how other items of the Commission's multi-year programme can be supported by the awareness and implementation of the GSGF.

8.   In collaboration with various other functional groups, including the Working Group on Geospatial Information of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the Expert Group supported several side events at the Commission. These side events focused on the impact and role of the GSGF as an enabling framework for other resources, including the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap; the side events also showcased several examples of national good practice, highlighting how the GSGF creates an enabling environment for geocoding and common geographies among many other areas.

III.   Advancing the Expert Group's work

Operationalising the Expert Group's strategic direction

9.   As part of the strategic direction agreed to at its seventh meeting in Santiago in November 2022, the Expert Group recognised the importance of reinforcing coordination activities as a means of operationalising and implementing the GSGF. This took the form of strengthening coordination across resource mobilisation, thematic, regional, and national dimensions.

10.   **Coordination at the national level.** The Expert Group believes that a key enabler of geo-statistical integration is to deepen the collaboration between NSOs and national geospatial information authorities (NGIAs). This collaborative approach will

---

[4] E/CN.3/2024/31 report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information
https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_55/documents/2024-31-GeoInfo-E.pdf
[5] See: Decision 55/103 (Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) (f) to (h), Decision 55/105 (Data science) (c), Decision 55/110 (Agricultural and rural statistics) (c), Decision 55/111 (Social Statistics) (c), Decision 55/113 (Population and housing censuses) (d), Decision 55/116 (Business and trade statistics) (f)

ensure the critical role of geospatial information is recognised and fully leveraged to address global challenges and advance sustainable development. The Expert Group promotes the fostering of stronger partnerships between NSOs and NGIAs as a means of mutually enhancing their capabilities and capacities whilst supporting a national data ecosystem that supports informed decision-making at all levels. Further, it has sought to facilitate and foster partnerships between countries as a means of sharing good practices of GSGF implementation through mutual collaboration.

11.   **Coordination at the regional level.** At the regional level, the Expert Group has intensified its collaboration with regional committees of the Committee and regional commissions of the United Nations. This coordinated effort aims to reduce duplication of work, improve the identification of regional gaps, and advance the implementation of the GSGF.

12.   **Thematic coordination**. In the intersessional period, the Expert Group has sought opportunities to facilitate the implementation and operationalisation of the GSGF across various thematic areas of the Statistical Commission, to target the inclusion of the GSGF within statistical reference documentation and thus encouraging the implementation of the GSGF, in alignment with its mandates. In this regard, the Expert Group has strongly supported the revision of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses through its member Brazil by chairing Task Team 3, "Geo-statistical integration in census", of the Expert Group on the Revision of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses. In cooperation with the Task Team on Statistical Business Registers of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics of the Statistical Commission, the Expert Group has supported the production of the document[6] "Note on Statistical Business Registers and Geospatial Information". The report highlights the importance and advantages of geospatially maintaining business registers enabled through the GSGF. In the coming intersessional period, the Expert Group is looking toward discussions on the review of the guidelines on rural and agricultural censuses and supporting the geo-statistical elements of the work programme of the Friends of the Chair Group on Social and Demographic Statistics, of the document "Promising Practices for Social and Demographic Statistics".

13.   **Resource mobilisation.** As a means of supporting the mobilisation of resources, the Expert Group has established partnerships, such as with the "Data for Now initiative[7]", as a means of expediting the implementation of the GSGF through the organisation of seminars and workshops and in-country capacity development efforts. However, despite these efforts, the Expert Group is fully cognisant of the need to step up the mobilisation of resources so that the GSGF can be fully operationalised and implemented at the national and regional levels.

Taking stock of progress against the work plan 2022 to 2024

14.   In the intersessional period, the Expert Group made progress against its workplan for the period 2022 to 2024, including the development of the paper "Benefits of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework for the Statistical Domain"; the current progress, and plans for the revision of the GSGF; and the development and operationalisation of the GSGF self-assessment tool. The primary means of advancing this work has been through three task teams: 1) Task Team on the Benefits of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework; 2) Task Team on Capacity Building; and 3) Task Team on the GSGF.

---

[6] See E/CN.3/2024/18 and https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_55/documents/BG-4b-Note_on_Statistical_Business_Registers_and_Geospatial_Information-E.pdf

[7] The Data for Now initiative works to secure high-level support and government buy-in from key providers and users of data within the National Statistical Systems (see E/CN.3/2023/3). It is co-led by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, United Nations Development Programme and the Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Task Team on the Benefits of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework

15.   Led by Canada and Mexico, the Task Team's primary focus is the development of a paper 'The Benefits of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) for the Statistical Domain'. The paper aims to underscore the role of the UN-IGIF in supporting the statistical domain to produce integrated statistics and geospatial information to better understand social, economic, and environmental systems, conditions, issues, and developments. Presently, the paper is structured into four chapters: 1) An introduction that provides concise background on the UN-IGIF and the importance of location-driven statistical information context; 2) A closer look at the UN-IGIF documentation and the framework; 3) The nine strategic pathways, key elements, and the benefits of each for statistical offices and national statistical systems; 4) Final considerations and reflections.

16.   The current paper is anchored on two key messages for leaders and decision-makers of national statistical Systems: i) Location-based and geospatially integrated statistical information plays a vital role in informing and addressing social, economic, and environmental systems and conditions; and, ii) The statistical domain can receive specific benefits from implementing the UN-IGIF, and the paper elaborates these benefits for each of the nine strategic pathways of the UN-IGIF.

17.   The Expert Group intends to circulate the paper for consultation to submit the paper to the forthcoming fifty-sixth Statistical Commission in March 2025 and proposes to coordinate this work with the High-level Group of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF) of the Committee. In this regard, the Expert Group recognises the importance of providing national experiences that detail how the UN-IGIF is being implemented to support national (and regional) statistical systems and invites Member States and regional bodies to share these experiences.

Task Team on capacity building

18.   The Task Team Capacity Building, led by Norway and Sweden, has been developing the self-assessment tool for the GSGF. The tool is now translated[8] into seven languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish) and allows each country to identify its stage in the implementation of the GSGF and the gaps that need to be overcome.

19.   The self-assessment tool was designed to help countries assess and enhance their geo-statistical maturity and capacity and to identify strengths and areas for improvement in integrating geospatial and statistical information. The self-assessment tool is primarily aimed at NSOs and NGIAs but is also designed for utilisation by other national institutions that produce, analyse, manage and disseminate geospatially integrated statistical data. Influenced by the strategic pathways of the UN-IGIF, but focused specifically on the assessment of geo-statistical capacity, the self-assessment tool is designed to assess five different dimensions of maturity: governance and institutional capacity; policy and legal aspects; human resources and capacity; data and interoperability; and technology and infrastructure. The GSGF assessment tool is underpinned by a basic data audit designed to ascertain the availability and quality of data sets aligned with the fourteen global fundamental geospatial data themes.

20.   In the coming intersessional period, the Task Team seeks to step up support to geo-statistical integration capacity development initiatives through the regional commissions and regional committees, and other organisations involved in geo-statistical capacity development. The objective is to become a first-stop destination

---

[8] E/CN.3/2024/31 report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information
https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_55/documents/2024-31-GeoInfo-E.pdf

for Member States and organisations seeking resources and advice for geo-statistical integration.

Task Team on the GSGF

21.   Led by the United Kingdom and the United States of America, the Task Team's primary focus is to review and revise the GSGF, with a focus on the following work items: i) An editorial review to simplify the language and structure of the documentation, ensuring clarity of message to leave no one behind; ii) To further promote the Expert Group's role as a bridge between the statistical and geospatial domains; iii) Elaborate on the GSGF's strategic positioning and alignment to key frameworks in the statistical and geospatial communities (e.g., the UN-IGIF, Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), the Geospatial View of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GeoGSPBM); and, iv) The inclusion of additional topics and guidance, reflecting novel statistical and geospatial developments since the initial drafting of the GSGF.

22.   The review will result in the publication of version 2.0 of the GSGF, simplified in structure and bolstered with additional supporting materials to facilitate the framework's implementation. The refreshed GSGF 2.0 will include novel topics such as Big Data, User-Defined Geographies, and Degree of Urbanisation, and expanded reference to previously introduced topics such as the role of Earth Observation and Statistical Grids in the context of the integration of statistical and geospatial information. The Task Team is further exploring options available to leverage existing web-based resources and assessing vehicles to promote expanded access to GSGF-related materials, furthering the goal of the continuous improvement of the GSGF as a living document.

23.   The Task Team had intended to present the revision of the GSGF for the Committee's endorsement. In light of the depth and scale of work being undertaken to include emergent items such as user-centric geographies, Big Data, and artificial intelligence, there are still items to be completed. Thus, the Expert Group wishes to conduct a series of virtual conversations with regional committees as a means of promoting, raising awareness, and finalising the revised GSGF in advance of the forthcoming fifty-sixth Statistical Commission. The task team welcomes the Committee's support and participation in the revision of the GSGF, and welcomes countries to provide national examples of good practice of its implementation.

24.   The UN-IGIF notes that "country-level partnerships are a way of getting the greatest output value from combining the available resources to strengthen geospatial information management, such as through joint advocacy, knowledge sharing, capacity building, policy development, product and service development, and fostering innovation[9]". As part of their regional work on the Statistical and Geospatial Framework for the Americas (MEGA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) pioneered a Memorandum of Agreement as a mechanism that enables good governance to better support NSOs (and by extension national statistical systems) to collaborate with NGIAs, and vice-versa, to the implementation of GSGF. The Memorandum of Agreement was informally translated as a joint effort between UNECLAC and the United Kingdom, with the Expert Group reviewing and suggesting minor amendments to what was developed by ECLAC.

25.   In the coming intersessional period, with the support of ECLAC, the Expert Group, via this Task Team, intends to work with the relevant stakeholders to review its Memorandum of Agreement between NSOs and NGIAs as a means of strengthening institutional governance between agencies for better geo-statistical

---

[9] see The Integrated Geospatial Information Framework Part 2: Implementation Guide, Strategic Pathway 7 Partnerships https://ggim.un.org/UN-IGIF/documents/SP7-Appendices-21Feb2020-GLOBAL-CONSULTATION.pdf

integration. The present draft of the Memorandum of Agreement is provided as a background document to this report.

Promoting the implementation and operationalisation of the GSGF

26.   The Expert Group has promoted and participated in a variety of in-person and virtual events to support the implementation of the GSGF. These events were promoted directly by Expert Group, like the side events at the Statistical Commission, or were carried out in partnership with other actors, such as the Data for Now initiative, UN-GGIM: Americas, ECLAC, and the United Nations Social and Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

27.   The Expert Group would like to highlight paragraphs 11 to 23 of its report[10] to the Statistical Commission, particularly as it pertains to how it has forged partnerships to enable capacity development activities to be convened. Through partnering with the Data for Now initiative, resources were provided to support the development and piloting of the GSGF self-assessment tool, in preparation for the High-level Seminar on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, which was convened at ESCAP on 28 to 30 November 2023.

Strengthening coordination and coherence

At the regional level

28.   During the intersessional period, the Expert Group has made efforts to enhance communication and coordination with each of the regional committees of the Committee. The Expert Group acknowledges that its members include representatives from Member States across all regions. However, due to the mixed composition of its membership, which includes both NSOs and NGIAs, there may be a discrepancy between a Member State's representation in the Expert Group and its active participation in its respective regional committees. In this regard, the Expert Group, at its forthcoming meeting, urges the participation of each of the regional committees to ensure that each committee can participate and support the Expert Group in capturing an updated global panorama and improving the coordination of activities in this domain.

29.   By way of example, the Expert Group wishes to highlight the current work of UN-GGIM: Americas in organising and delivering a series of virtual seminars on the GSGF that highlight regional and national experiences of implementation and operationalisation. Another example has been the collaboration with the ESCAP Statistics Division to convene the High-level Seminar on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information. There is more to be done, especially to raise awareness of the GSGF in all regions. In this regard, the Expert Group seeks to continue its engagement with regional actors.

With functional groups of the Statistical Commission and of the Committee of Experts

30.   In making decision 13/108, at its thirteenth session in August 2023, the Committee of Experts, *inter alia*, urged Member States to continue to implement and operationalise the GSGF as a tool for attaining geospatially enabled statistical data for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognised that addressing the many data integration challenges presented by complex issues such as climate change and disaster resilience requires the full implementation of the GSGF at the national and regional levels. During the intersessional period, the Expert Group focused on consolidating collaborations with the functional groups of the Statistical Commission (including the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics on supporting a discussion paper on the role of geo-statistical integration in Statistical Business

---

[10] E/CN.3/2024/31 report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_55/documents/2024-31-GeoInfo-E.pdf

Registers; the Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics in exploring how geo-statistical integration can support the use of Big Data for Statistics; the Working Group on Geospatial Information of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators with its work on geo-statistical integration for the SDG indicators; and supporting the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses for the 2030 round). The Expert Group is seeking to initiate new collaborations within the scope of the Statistical Commission's functional groups, namely with Gender and Social Statistics and Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

31.   The Expert Group recognises its role as a bridge between the statistical and geospatial communities requires equal support and engagement, and there is still work to be done. The primary touch point between the Expert Group and the Committee is the HLG-IGIF, as the anchor for the Committee's work. Moreover, the Expert Group notes and welcomes the many areas of overlap where members mutually and actively participate in both groups. By way of another example, is the work of the Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management and its paper "Authoritative data in an evolving geospatial landscape: an exploration of policy and legal challenges" whilst having a focus on geospatial entities, including national mapping, cadastral and land registration authorities, does not mean the substance is not relevant for the application and promotion to national statistical offices to enable the better production, sustainability and use of geospatially integrated statistical data, that is also deemed to be authoritative and reliable. The Expert Group reiterates its willingness to assist, to help raise awareness of this paper, and to communicate other relevant outputs of the Committee's functional groups to the broader statistical community where appropriate.

Collaboration with the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

32.   With Economic and Social Council resolution 2022/3 and Statistical Commission decision 48/108, the Expert Group has been liaising with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) through their Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management, to review their draft position paper on "The development of a globally unique identifier for cities".

33.   Guided by recommendation 3/2023/R/2[11] and decision 3/2023/D/17[12] of the 2023 session of UNGEGN, the convenor of the Working Group Geographical Names Data Management presented a draft paper on the proposal for a global unique identifier for cities to the Expert Group for its consideration and input. The draft paper discusses that while there are several unique identifier systems for countries (including M49 and ISO 3166 standards), there is presently no agreed unique identifier system for cities. Thus, by examining good practices of data management, principles of Linked Data, and other relevant concepts through the lens of geographical names, the paper discusses factors around developing a unique identifier for cities and proposes the establishment of such an identifier, under the oversight, and operationalisation of the Statistics Division. In its deliberations, the Expert Group welcomes the paper and approves the suggestion of the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management for the Statistics Division to pilot a unique identifier based on the URI or UUID approach in alignment with the recommendation and decision of the 2023 session of UNGEGN. The Expert Group intends to share this concept and report on its progress in this collaborative exercise to the Statistical Commission at its fifty-sixth session.

---

[11] see E/2023/84 report of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its 2023 Session
[12] Specifically, items (i) welcomed the concept of a unique and standardized identifier for cities and other geographical features within the Database; and, (ii) requested UNSD, within available resources, to enhance the functionality of, and data in, the Database

Ongoing working modalities of the Expert Group

34.   The next in-person meeting of the Expert Group is scheduled to take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17 to 19 September 2024 at the offices of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Expert Group will convene its eighth meeting jointly with the seventh meeting of the Working Group on Geospatial Information of Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. This strategy is designed to reinforce coordination between the two groups.

IV.   Towards 2030 and beyond

35.   The Expert Group aims to redouble its efforts to promote and raise awareness of the GSGF across various statistical domains such as the environment, agriculture, social, and demographics, among many others where geo-statistical integration is a key enabler. In this regard, the Expert Group is realistic in that while the use of traditional data collection techniques will persist, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the upcoming 2030 census round, there are still opportunities to implement the GSGF and receive the benefits that its implementation provides.

36.   With a view to looking beyond the 2030 Agenda, the Expert Group presently welcomes how the production of statistical and geospatial information is being revolutionised, whereby global to local data ecosystems now include a wider array of contributors anchored around NSOs and NGIAs. In this light, the many technological innovations and advancements, such as the increased availability of Earth observations and imagery, improved computational resources, and more accessible and available administrative records, offer an opportunity to integrate more sources of data from authoritative and non-authoritative sources.

37.   The Expert Group views that the present data environment is moving away from traditional data collection methods like household surveys towards more novel data collection methods. As demonstrated by the response to COVID-19, the demand from decision-makers for geospatially integrated statistical data is immense, and there is much distance to travel before geospatially integrated data systems meets this demand. As data production environment evolves, the role of good governance becomes ever more important. Among the many reports presented to the Committee of Experts, there is a common theme that national information systems must adapt to manage and integrate these diverse data sources cohesively. The solution to meeting these demands is anchored in geospatial information. As such, the Expert Group recognises the vital role of the UN-IGIF as the means for countries to guide their efforts in strengthening their national data ecosystem, with the GSGF acting as an enabler to integrate statistical data within this ecosystem and prepare for the future. In looking beyond, the Expert Group recognises it must also consider the integration of other forms of information, and especially in identifying mechanisms to disaggregate data to local geographic levels.

38.   By offering more localised granular information, local data enables policy- and decision-makers the means to tailor interventions according to the unique needs of different communities, ultimately leading to more targeted and impactful solutions. In this regard, NSOs and NGIAs are at the vanguard of generating the geospatially integrated statistical data that local (and national) decision-makers can use to inform data-driven, evidence-based decision-making. This integration enables more precise and context-aware decision-making processes, allowing for the detailed mapping of trends, patterns, and correlations across different regions and territories. By enhancing the granularity of analysis, geo-statistical integration ensures that policies and interventions are tailored to local conditions, maximising their effectiveness. Many countries, both developed and developing, do struggle with translating their statistical data into local action. This situation is further complicated as many statistical outputs are not geo-referenced to a geography that provides meaning at the

local level. This is a challenge the Expert Group will consider in-depth at its forthcoming meeting in Nairobi, aiming to develop a work plan for 2024 to 2026, anchored by the UN-IGIF and GSGF, that will advance the integration of statistical and geospatial information to enhance decision-making at all levels, with a focus on local contexts.

39.   In the immediate intersessional period, the Expert Group seeks to finalise two key pieces of work. The first is the revision of the GSGF to take advantage of the transformed data production landscape since the GSGF's adoption in 2019. The second is to finalise its paper 'The Benefits of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework for the Statistical Domain' and actively seeks the participation and support of the Committee in both endeavours. The Expert Group looks forward to enhancing its engagement with the Committee's regional committees and functional groups so that the views, impact, and work of these committees and groups are considered. The Expert Group will build on its efforts to mobilise resources that enable the implementation of the GSGF along with the UN-IGIF.

V.   Points for Discussion

40.   **The Committee of Experts is invited to:**

(a)   Take note of the present report, provide guidance and urge for the continued adoption and implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework;

(b)   Take note of the progress, work, and activities of the Expert Group during this intersessional period and encourage contributions from Member States and relevant stakeholders including mobilizing additional resources to support the implementation of the GSGF;

(c)   Express its views and provide guidance on efforts to prepare a paper 'Benefits of the UN-IGIF for the statistical domain', the GSGF self-assessment tool, and a paper 'Development of a globally unique identifier for cities'; and that these efforts remained aligned with the strategic objectives and programme of work of the Committee; and

(d)   Take note of plans to develop a work plan for 2024 to 2026, and to convene its in-person eighth meeting at UN-Habitat in Nairobi from 17 – 19 September 2024.