



Fourteenth session

“Authoritative data and evolving geospatial landscape”

Monday, 05 August 2024

16:45 p.m. to 18:00 p.m.

Conference Room 12 (CR-12 GA building)

Concept note

Background

In today's world, authoritative geospatial data is fundamental to numerous applications, and to support delivery of national development and strategic priorities. Over the past thirty years, the geospatial landscape has expanded rapidly, with more and more disciplines incorporating geospatial data and technologies into their analytical toolboxes and decision making. This growth has been defined by an increase in the number of data providers, including those from the private sector and civil society. Technological advances in geospatial data acquisition have resulted in an ever-increasing volume, variety and velocity of data. Geospatial data is now more diverse than ever, with sectors not traditionally associated with geospatial, such as health, finance and business, leveraging it for their analyses. This evolution requires the consideration of governing authoritative data through distributed or shared authority, including cross-sectoral collaboration. National legal, regulatory and policy frameworks may need to evolve to accommodate this new geospatial reality and operating environment.

In an evolving landscape, the need for clear definitions, robust governance frameworks, and cross-sectoral and international collaboration is fundamental. Some geospatial domains have well-established practices for designating authoritative data. Geospatial data produced in domains like ecosystem conservation, flood mapping, and wildfire monitoring may not be legally mandated but are considered authoritative by practitioners depending on the context. Critical national infrastructure, such as transportation networks, utility grids, and supply chains, relies heavily on authoritative geospatial data. This data is also crucial for informed policy development and decision making. The evolving geospatial landscape requires considering how to better manage data in non-legally regulated geospatial domains, when additional regulation is warranted, and the unique challenges posed by the lack of regulation. Some countries have established organizations that treat geospatial data as a strategic national asset, optimizing it for government, commercial, and public use. Further considerations should explore the significance of authoritative data, of sound and robust legal, regulatory and policy framework in the future geospatial information ecosystem and the wider digital ecosystem. The 'criticality' of the data to decision-makers is a key consideration.

At its [Thirteenth Session](#), the Committee of Experts endorsed the paper “Authoritative Data in an Evolving Geospatial Landscape: An Exploration of Policy and Legal Challenges.” This paper serves as a policy and legal guide to help national geospatial entities better produce, sustain, and govern the use of authoritative geospatial information. It promotes the concept of a continuum of “Control versus Trust” for authoritative data governance based on national circumstances. The paper addresses issues of authoritative data, authoritativeness, and custodianship, and explores diverse understandings of these topics across different domains and national contexts. It also discusses policy and legal challenges associated with authoritative

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data production, use, and distribution, including authoritativeness designation, shifting contexts, diversity, competition, branding, harmonization, and open access. For those seeking guidance, the paper suggests a “fit-for-purpose” framework, considering that the designation of authoritative data is heavily dependent on its intended use. This paper lays the groundwork for an in-depth exploration of fit-for-purpose data in crisis scenarios, highlighting the necessity of exploring the pre-conditions for trust and balancing potential trade-offs among different data characteristics to fulfill specific needs.

Also at the thirteenth session, the Committee of Experts welcomed efforts to discuss and explore the future geospatial information ecosystem to assist Member States and national geospatial information agencies in their thinking on current and future geospatial landscapes, in which technological developments and innovative applications would play a crucial role. The Committee also noted that new and emerging technologies and the growth of wider digital and data ecosystems, of which geospatial data and services are a part, provided further opportunities to create, manage and access geospatial information in innovative ways, and that geospatially integrated data would provide critical context to global development agenda including beyond 2030.

Objectives

To promote an open, inclusive and participatory discussion on -

- Authoritative, fit-for-purpose geospatial data for crises and its accompanying policy and legal considerations in the midst of evolving geospatial landscape;
- The impacts of innovative application of geospatial information, artificial intelligence and the evolving geospatial landscape on national geospatial information management;
- The role of national geospatial information entities, authoritative data and sound and robust policy and legal framework in the future geospatial information ecosystem.

Provisional agenda

1. **Welcome and setting-the-scene** (35 minutes)

Presenters:

Ms. Kristine Hirschhorn (*Canada/Co-Chair Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management*)

Mr. Mohammad AlMabrook (*Saudi Arabia/Co-Convenor Writing Team on the Future Geospatial Information Ecosystem*)

Ms. Sallie Payne Snell (*Secretary General and Executive Director of the EuroGeographics Head Office*)

2. **Moderated and open discussion** * (30 minutes)

Moderator:

Mr. Asim Alghamdi (*Saudi Arabia/Co-Chair Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management*)

Discussants:

- Ms. Maroale Chauke (*South Africa/chair, UN-GGIM: Africa*)
- Ms. Michelle Edwards (*Jamaica/co-Chair, Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services on Disasters*) (tbc)
- Mr. Alexander Caldas (*UNEP/UN Geospatial Network*)
- Mr. John Nyberg (*International Hydrographic Organization*)
- Mr. Zaffar Sadiq Mohamed-Ghouse (*Chair, Private sector network / Advisory & Innovation*)

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Director, Woolpert Asia-Pacific) (tbc)

(each discussant will deliver an introductory statement of around 2-3 minutes, as reflections on the focus of the Open Meeting, the three setting-the-scene presentations or to support further discussions and consideration addressing the issue of authoritative data and the evolving geospatial landscape.)*

3. Closing reflections and close (10 minutes)

Joint Moderators:

Mr. Mohammad Almabrook (WT-FGIE) / Ms. Kristine Hirschhorn (Co-Chair of WG-P&LF)