

Economic and Social Council

07 July 2025

Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Fifteenth session

New York, 6–8 August 2025

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Contribution of thematic networks to the global geospatial information agenda

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary of the report

The present paper contains the report of the contributions of the four United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management thematic networks to the global geospatial information agenda, for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its fourteenth session, held from 7 to 9 August 2024, the Committee of Experts adopted decision [14/103](#), in which it expressed appreciation for the continuing and valuable contributions of the thematic networks to the Committee's programme of work, including their effective representation, research, education, capacity-development activities and collaborative initiatives with the five regional committees, functional groups and United Nations global geospatial centres in advancing their workplans and in implementing the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework. The Committee also expressed appreciation for the cooperation and synergies between thematic networks and Member States through open communication so as to ensure that their contributions were effective and aligned with the Committee's priorities for the benefit of Member States and contributing to their sustainable development. The Committee welcomed the support offered, including by the United Nations Geospatial Network to strengthen their contribution through the implementation of the One United Nations Geospatial Situation Room to bring coherence on data governance and federated data services and to provide use cases to support capacity-development activities for Member States. The Committee acknowledged the work being done in researching and exploring the use and benefits of artificial intelligence, Earth observations and other innovative technologies.

In the report, the Academic Network provides an update on its continuing efforts to develop capacity- and education-related activities within the context of the programme of work of the Committee of Experts, especially in supporting the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals. The report provides information on the active involvement of the Academic Network in organizing, with all the thematic networks during the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts, a joint side event on geospatial data, analytics and geospatial artificial intelligence: accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals and making an impact on national priorities and its participation in other events, such as the fifth plenary meeting of the High-level

* [E/C.20/2025/1](#).

Group of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the meeting of the expanded Bureau of the Committee of Experts and the twelfth plenary meeting of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Regional Committee for the Arab States. The newly elected Executive Committee initiated discussions with the Co-Chairs of the Committee of Experts on possible opportunities to work together in pursuit of strengthening geospatial information management around the globe by leveraging the strength of the Network. It is noted in the report that the Network began to explore collaboration with the United Nations global geospatial centres, such as the United Nations Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre. It is also noted in the report that, since the Network's most recent update on its membership, in which it reported having 70 members, 6 new members have joined the Network, with 7 additional membership applications pending review and approval. The report concludes with a discussion of the continued efforts of the Network in strategic planning and actions for: (a) working closely with all functional groups of the Committee of Experts; (b) developing capacities and training programmes to support the programme of work of the Committee of Experts; and (c) collaborating with academic communities to develop capacities and educational programmes that are more closely related to the programme of work of the Committee of Experts and in close cooperation with the established United Nations global geospatial centres.

In the report, the Geospatial Societies network provides information on its principal activities and contributions. During the intersessional period, the Geospatial Societies network reaffirmed its position as a valued partner in geospatial artificial intelligence and in the geospatial ecosystem and its engagement with the broader agenda of the Committee of Experts. The Geospatial Societies network actively participated in major events, including the eleventh plenary meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Europe, the thirteenth plenary meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific, the twelfth plenary meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Arab States and the fifth plenary meeting of the High-level Group of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, as well as proceedings on the future geospatial information ecosystem. A significant development is the new terms of reference for the Geospatial Societies network, which realigned its purpose to support the broader programme of work of the Committee of Experts. In the report, geospatial societies, such as the International Cartographic Association, the International Federation of Surveyors, the International Society for Digital Earth, the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, the International Geographical Union and other societies, note that congresses, annual conferences and events provide platforms through which to further discuss and promote the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals to their respective networks. It is also noted in the report that the International Science Council GeoUnions group and the Committee on Data for Science and Technology offer webinars related to geospatial artificial intelligence.

The report provides an update by the Private Sector Network on its activities and contributions during the intersessional period. In the report, the Private Sector Network reaffirms its position as a valued partner in the global geospatial ecosystem by advancing capacity development, engaging in regional initiatives and integrating private sector perspectives into the broader programme of work of the Committee of Experts. The Private Sector Network actively participated in major events, including the eleventh annual meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Europe, the seventh High-level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, the thirteenth Regional

Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific meeting, the twelfth Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Arab States plenary and the fifth High-level Group of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, and contributed to the Framework's new "Sustainable funding guide", as well as to proceedings on the future geospatial information ecosystem. A significant development is the addition of 25 new member companies, underscoring the growing recognition of the value of the private sector. The Private Sector Network appeared on social media to enhance its outreach and visibility. The Network supported emerging talent by sponsoring student participation in the seventh High-level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, held in Mexico. Regionally, the Network deepened its collaboration in Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, the Arab States and Africa. The report provides details of the contribution of the Network to strategic documents and its participation in shaping the future geospatial information ecosystem, with a continued focus on innovation, climate change and sustainability.

The report also provides information on the activities of the United Nations Geospatial Network and its continued efforts to strengthen the coherence and coordination of global geospatial information management across the 42 agencies funds and programmes of the United Nations system. The Geospatial Network made progress on implementation of its updated strategy for the period 2020–2025, entitled "Blueprint: geospatial for a better world – transforming the lives of people, places and planet", and the proposal for the upcoming five-year strategic document for the period 2025–2030, both of which are aligned with accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are informed by the frameworks, norms, principles and guides developed and adopted by the Committee of Experts. The report includes details of the Network's current priorities, namely: (a) to obtain sustainable sources of funding; (b) to increase communication on and awareness of the relevance of geospatial information through events and seminars; and (c) to work towards the availability and accessibility of coordinated geospatial information through the One United Nations Geospatial Situation Room, effectively delivering, collectively, one map of integrated geospatial data services, available at onemap.un.org, for easy access to these resources. The report also contains information on other priorities, including organization of the upcoming activities of the United Nations Geospatial Network towards implementation of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework to strengthen national geospatial capacities, especially in developing countries and the most vulnerable communities, and strengthening geospatial data management, innovation, foresight and science to build a United Nations system that can better support Member States in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The One United Nations Geospatial Situation Room is recognized as an important resource for geospatial enablement of the United Nations data platform in the overall context of the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere. The report provides information on the continued efforts of the Network in terms of communication and outreach, including its participation in the Geospatial World Forum and collaboration with other networks of the Committee of Experts.

I. Introduction

1. At its fourteenth session, held from 7 to 9 August 2024, the Committee of Experts adopted decision [14/103](#), in which it expressed its appreciation for the continuing and valuable contributions of the thematic networks to its programme of work, including their effective representation, research, education, capacity-development activities and collaborative initiatives with the five regional committees, functional groups and United Nations global geospatial centres in advancing their workplans and in implementing the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF). The Committee appreciated the cooperation and synergies between thematic networks and Member States and stressed its importance to advance the programme of work of the Committee of Experts, and requested the thematic networks to maintain open communication, to coordinate and avoid duplication of efforts so as to ensure that their contributions are effective and aligned with the Committee's priorities for the benefit of Member States and contributing to their sustainable development;

2. During the intersessional period, collectively and individually, the thematic networks have continued their work, including to deepen the collaboration within and between their networks, and to contribute to the programme of work of the Committee of Experts. This present report summarizes the main activities and achievements of the four thematic networks of the Committee of Experts during the intersessional period. The detailed reports of each of the four thematic networks are provided as background documents for this present report. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 27.

II. Thematic networks of the Committee of Experts

UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies

3. The UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies is a coalition of eleven international organizations, involved in the coordination, development, management, standardization or regulation of geospatial information and technologies and related matters. As detailed on its [website](#), the Geospatial Societies' member organizations include: [Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society](#) (IEEE-GRSS), [International Association of Geodesy](#) (IAG), [International Cartographic Association](#) (ICA), [International Federation of Surveyors](#) (FIG), [International Geographical Union](#) (IGU), [International Map Industry Association](#) (IMIA), [International Science Council](#) (ISC) CODATA, [International Society for Digital Earth](#) (ISDE), [International Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing](#) (ISPRS), [International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics](#) (IUGG), [Open Source Geospatial Foundation](#) (OSGEO). During the intersessional period, the Geospatial Societies made significant progress in revising its Terms of Reference, aligning its purpose more closely with the broader agenda of the Committee of Experts.

4. The UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies have been involved or contributed to the operationalization of the United Nations Global Centres of Excellence including:

- (a) The UN Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence (UN-GGCE) with the involvement of IAG, FIG and IUGG
- (b) The UN Global Geospatial Innovation and Knowledge Centre (UN-GGKIC) with the involvement of ICA, FIG, and ISPRS; and
- (c) The upcoming establishment of the UN Global Geospatial Ecosystem Centre of Excellence (UN-GGECE) with the potential involvement of ICA, IGU, and ISDE.

5. The UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies participated in several events and expert meetings in support of the programme of work of the Committee, including:

- (a) The seventh High-Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, in Mexico City, Mexico (October 2024) with attendance by FIG, ICA, ISDE, IGU;
 - (b) The fifth plenary meeting of the HLG-IGIF and meeting of the Bureau and its Expanded Bureau, 2 - 4 February 2025 with attendance by ICA, IGU, ISDE. During the fifth plenary meeting of the HLG-IGIF, the Geospatial Societies committed to actively contributing to the implementation of the UN-IGIF, emphasizing the importance of coordinating the involvement of various societies to leverage their expertise in support of the UN-IGIF initiatives; and
 - (c) UN-GGIM regional meetings 2024-2025: Asia-Pacific (IGU, ICA, ISPRS), Americas (ICA, ISPRS, Open Source Geospatial Foundation (OSGeo), Arab States (ICA, ISPRS), Europe (ICA, ISDE), Africa (ISPRS).
6. The Geospatial Societies provided support to several functional groups of the Committee of Experts and others:
- (a) High-Level Group on the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF);
 - (b) Working Group on Geospatial Information (WGGI) under the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs); and,
 - (c) Subcommittee on Geodesy, Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, Working Group on Geospatial Information for Disaster Risk Management, Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management, and Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information; and
 - (d) Toponymy (not by the Committee of Experts).
7. In the intersessional period, the Geospatial Societies launched a survey on the main training centres of the world on Geo-AI in Spring 2024, the results of which were put on a platform with an interactive map that will be regularly updated.
8. Members of the Geospatial Societies affiliated with the International Science Council (ISC) GeoUnions, either independently or in collaboration, organized the following webinar series to exchange information, establish coordination structures, and highlight their activities within the context of the programme of work of the Committee of Experts. The Geospatial Societies aims to further promote and make the webinar available through the Geospatial Societies website in the coming years:
- (a) ISC GeoUnions [Distinguish lecture series](#)
 - (b) ISDE Lectures on “[Digital Earth](#)”
 - (c) Joint webinar of ICA, IMIA, and others on “[Trust in Mapping](#)”
 - (d) ISPRS Student Consortium [webinar series](#)
 - (e) ISC CODATA podcast on “[Open Geo AI](#)”

UN-GGIM Academic Network

9. During the intersessional period, the Academic Network’s membership has reached seventy-six institutions. The details of the members are available on the [Academic Network website](#). Since September 2024, the Academic Network has admitted six new members, and eight new members requests are pending. The Network’s members are regularly promoting the Network and its activities via the events advertised on [the Network’s website](#).

10. The composition of the new elected Academic Network's Executive Committee, Advisory Board, and representatives to the Regional Committees are detailed on the [Network's website](#). During this intersessional period, the Network focused on: 1) developing capacity building and education activities within the context of the Committee of Experts, especially supporting the implementation of the UN-IGIF and SDGs, and 2) organizing in-person and virtual seminars and workshops to engage its members. Regular board meetings were held to discuss and plan its activities.

11. The Network was actively involved in organizing the joint side event on "Geospatial Data Analytics and GeoAI Accelerating the SDGs and Impacting National Priorities" with all thematic networks during the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts. The Academic Network also participated in other important events such as the fifth plenary meeting of the HLG-IGIF, the Expanded Bureau meeting, and the 12th Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM Arab States in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In addition, the Academic Network:

- (a) Organized an online members' meeting to solicit their ideas or suggestions on how to better support UN-GGIM's mission (November 2024)
- (b) Organized the UN-GGIM Panel at the ISPRS TC IV mid-term symposium, in Fremantle, Australia (October 2024)
- (c) Participated in the United Nations Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Week 2024, in Deqing, China (October 2024)

12. While the focus area for the Academic Network in 2023-2024 was on GeoAI, the newly elected Executive Committee appreciated its discussion with Co-chairs of the Committee of Experts and others on possible opportunities to work together in pursuit of strengthening geospatial information management around the globe leveraging the strength of the Network. The Network has also already started exploring collaborations with the UN Global Geospatial Centres of Excellence, such as with the United Nations Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre (UN-GGIKC). The Network will further its effort to:

- (a) Encourage all member states to expand education and capacity building opportunities in support of the strategic goals of the Committee of Experts, in particular fostering scholarship opportunities for women and underrepresented groups in collaboration with the professional societies and the thematic networks of the Committee;
- (b) Welcome the progress achieved by the UN Centres of Excellence, which fosters academic collaboration and excellence, and recommend Member States to consider and to support the establishment of geospatial excellence programs;
- (c) Note with concern the identified knowledge gaps with currently hinder the successful implementation of the Committee of Experts goals in respect to the UN-IGIF and SDGs, and consider beneficial the establishment of specifically tailored educational and training programs to address these knowledge gaps, and
- (d) Consider the establishment of a centre of excellence which could be tasked with such roles as promoting trustworthiness in geospatial data, its processing, and map production.

13. The Network will continue to encourage and engage more members and young professionals (including students) to support its strategic plans.

UN-GGIM Private Sector Network

14. During this period, the Private Sector Network maintained robust engagement with global, regional, and thematic initiatives aligned with the Committee's objectives. The Network continued to advance innovation, climate resilience, and sustainability within the global geospatial ecosystem, reinforcing its role as a key contributor to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

15. The Private Sector Network contributed substantively to several activities of the Committee of Experts, including working groups, webinars, and documentation efforts. It supported the development of strategic documents such as the Future Geospatial Information Ecosystem and actively contributed to Working Group 4 on the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF). The Network's technical and policy-oriented input provided valuable private sector perspectives to the evolving geospatial governance landscape.

16. A notable development during the reporting period was the addition of 25 new private sector members to the Private Sector Network, reflecting increased recognition of the value of private sector expertise in geospatial initiatives. The launch of Private Sector Network's social media presence marked a further step in enhancing communication, outreach, and visibility within the global community. The Network also strengthened its organizational footprint through the establishment of sub-regional leadership structures in the Americas and a regional Private Sector Network committee in Asia-Pacific.

17. The Private Sector Network's regional engagements included participation in key plenary meetings of the five UN-GGIM regional committees: Asia-Pacific (New Delhi), Americas (Mexico City), Europe (Belgium), Africa (Addis Ababa), and the Arab States (Jeddah). Activities spanned high-level forums, thematic workshops, and regional planning sessions. In the Americas, Private Sector Network supported the CARIGEO initiative through a national UN-IGIF workshop in Trinidad and Tobago and a disaster risk webinar on Hurricane Beryl, in collaboration with the working group on geospatial information for disaster risk management and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Private Sector Network also co-organized the event "Industry and Academia Bridge the Gap" with the Academic Network of the Americas and contributed to establishing the GeoAI Community of Practice.

18. The Private Sector Network reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to the mandate of the Committee of Experts and to fostering inclusive, innovative, and impactful geospatial solutions. Through expanding membership, strategic regional structures, and continued knowledge exchange, the Private Sector Network remains a dedicated partner in strengthening the global geospatial ecosystem and supporting Member States in achieving sustainable development goals.

United Nations Geospatial Network

19. The UN Geospatial Network currently comprises forty-two UN system entities as members. Official representatives were renewed at the beginning of 2025 through the formal communication within the UN system. In accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Geospatial Network (see Annex of [E/C.20/2023/7/Add.1](#)), a new Steering Group was appointed by consensus during its virtual meeting in June 2025, as follows:

- (a) Chair: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO);
- (b) Vice-Chairs: World Bank Groups (WB) and World Health Organization (WHO); and
- (c) Steering Group members: International Organization for Migration (IOM); International Telecommunication Union (ITU); Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and the secretariat of the Committee of Experts.

20. The Network continued to implement its strategy document “[Blueprint: Geospatial for a better world – transforming the lives of People, Places and Planet](#)” (2020 to 2025), guided by the frameworks, norms, practices, and standards developed by the Committee of Experts. The Network initiated the development of the new strategic orientations and design of its next five years strategy document “Blueprint Strategy to 2030: Geospatial for People, Places and Planet” (2025 to 2030), presented as a background document to the fifteenth session of the Committee of Experts.

21. The UN Geospatial Network advanced the availability and accessibility of coordinated geospatial information services, systems, and activities across UN entities, through the One United Nations Geospatial Situation Room, leveraging the standardized One Map web service, outlined in its [2024 concept document](#). The Network continued consultations on the One UN Geospatial Situation Room and launched the domain onemap.un.org, implemented to facilitate resource access. In accordance with decision [14/103 \(d\)](#) of the Committee of Experts regarding “use cases to support capacity development activities for Member States”, the Network members featured SDG Story Maps related to geospatial activities supporting sustainable development. The One UN Geospatial Situation Room was recognized as a primary geospatial resource for the UN Data platform in the overall context of the UN Secretary General’s Data Strategy.

22. During the inter-sessional period, the UN Geospatial Network continued raising communication and awareness on the use and relevance of geospatial information within the United Nations system and beyond, through participation in, contributions to, and organization of various events, including:

- (a) UN Geospatial Network plenary and strategic meeting, in Madrid, Spain (March 2025)
- (b) Geospatial World Forum 2025, in Madrid, Spain (March 2025)
- (c) AI for Good 2025 Summit, in Geneva, Switzerland (July 2025)

23. The Network launched the “GeoCommunities” initiative to strengthen UN-wide dialogue and coordination on key areas of geospatial activities. The Network established nine priority themes, including capacity development, centralized infrastructure, risk analysis, GeoAI, SDGs, etc... Through this initiative the UN Geospatial Network also aims to expand its structure and foster closer collaboration with interested Member States.

24. The UN Geospatial Network continued its “[GeoTalks](#)” series to promote knowledge sharing and raise awareness of the importance and relevance of geography, data, technology, and innovation for Member States and the United Nations for better decision-making.

25. The UN Geospatial Network continued to investigate sustainable funding sources, including from the private sector, to support the development of the One UN Geospatial Situation Room, as well as the implementation of the UN-IGIF, particularly in developing countries. The funds would enhance the coordination of national geospatial capacity development activities conducted by the United Nations and address priorities for the development of the One UN Geospatial Situation Room.

26. Finally, relevant United Nations system entities engage and contribute to the work of the international standards development organization related to geodesy, land cover and land use, land and sea boundaries, postal addresses, land administrative domain model and others. The UN Geospatial Network also actively

engages with other thematic networks of the Committee of Experts to support the mandates and operations of its member entities.

III. Points for Discussion

27. The Committee of Experts is invited to:

- (a) Take note of and express its views on the contributions to the global geospatial information agenda by its four thematic networks; and**
- (b) Express its views and provide guidance on the need to work collaboratively across the thematic networks, avoiding duplication and ensuring alignment with the priorities and programme of work of the Committee for the benefit of all Member States.**