

## Background Report 2025

### *Fifteenth Session of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management*

August 2025 – 15<sup>th</sup> Session

#### Summary

*The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Geospatial Societies during the intersessional period 2024-2025. The Geospatial Societies is a coalition of 11 international organizations involved in geospatial information and related matters. A significant development in 2024-2025 was the statement of the **new terms of reference (ToR) for the Geospatial Societies** realigning its purpose to support the broader UN-GGIM agenda. The report provides details on the increased involvement of the societies in the UN-GGIM collective objectives, committees and meetings.*

#### UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies (UN-GGIM GS)

The UN GGIM Geospatial Societies Thematic Network is a coalition of recognized international organizations involved in the coordination, development, management, standardization or regulation of geospatial information and related matters.

These organizations are:

- IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society (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 Society for Digital Earth (ISDE)
- International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS)
- International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG)
- Open-Source Geospatial Foundation (OSGEO)
- International Science Council CODATA (CODATA)

The UN GGIM GS made five online meetings during the period 2024-2025 to exchange information and put in place the necessary structure to better organize their activities. To coordinate their own educational and scientific workshops and meetings having many topics related to UN-GGIM (sometimes with specific UN-GGIM sessions), an updated joint calendar is now regularly available on the [Geospatial Societies website](#).

This background-report provides a general view on the activities of the joint contributions of the societies within the UN-GGIM and the IGIF perspectives.

## Activities of the Geospatial Societies in the UN-GGIM in 2024-2025

The Geospatial Societies (GS) network continued to develop and adapt their leadership detailed under its [website](#). The 11 Geospatial Societies are now further creating synergies by conducting joint action and engagement together inside the UN-GGIM (points 1 to 7) and by developing their own activities in this perspective (point 8 and 9). The new Terms of Reference (ToR) of the GS network (point 10) seek to consolidate this reinforcement of joined actions.

### 1. The GS involvement in the setting-up of the three UN-GGIM Centres

#### The UN Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence in Bonn, Germany:

- President of IAG is an observer on advisory board.
- Chair of FIG Commission 5 is member of advisory board.
- Harald Schuh (IUGG Liaison Officer to UN-GGIM) attended the Expert Consultation Meeting on Strengthening the Global Geodetic Supply Chain, GGCE, Bonn, Germany, 22-23 April 2024

#### The UN Global Geospatial Innovation and Knowledge Centre in Deqing, China:

- ICA (Past President Member) visit anticipated for 4.25
- FIG attended by VP elect Qin Yan and other FIG representatives
- ISPRS organized a workshop on 3D mapping for sustainable development, July 2025, in Deqing

**The UN Global Geospatial Ecosystem Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia:** IGU (Celine Rozenblat) and ISDE (Zaffar Sadiq Mohamed-Ghouse) participate to the working group on the definition of the Future Geospatial Information Ecosystem (writing team).

### 2. The GS contribution to the preparation of the 7<sup>th</sup> High-Level Forum on UN-GGIM in Mexico City on 6 – 8 October 2024.

ICA, ISDE and FIG participated to the advisory committee meeting. ICA (Tim Trainor) organized and chaired the session on **Barriers to implementation - preparing for the future**. ISDE (Zaffar Mohamed-Ghouse) co-organized and chaired the session on **the future geospatial ecosystem**. FIG attended with several representatives: David Elegbede, Nigeria, FIG Young Surveyors, attended together with two other Young Surveyors supported by Woolpert. They were involved in a special session on Young Professionals and Women. FIG reported on [its participation to this event](#).

### 3. The GS participation to the Fifth plenary meeting of the HLG-IGIF and meeting of the Bureau and its Expanded Bureau, 2 - 4 Feb. 2025, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

ICA (Tim Trainor), IGU (Celine Rozenblat), ISDE (Zaffar Mohamed-Ghouse) participated to the whole meeting.

### 4. The GS participation to the UN-GGIM regional meetings 2024-2025

#### 4.1 Asia-Pacific

- IGU (Dr. Pankaj Kumar) and ISPRS (Orhan Altan) attended and delivered talk as plenary speaker in the United Nations Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Week 2024, UNGEONOW2024 held in Deqing, China, 21-24 October 2024.
- President of IAG represented IAG at 13<sup>th</sup> UN-GGIM-AP Plenary Meeting and Conferences in New Delhi (India), 26-29 November 2024.
- ICA participated to the AsiaCarto Conference in Hong-Kong, 8-10 December 2024

- ISPRS (Jiang Jie) attended and give keynote speech in the Asian Conference on Remote Sensing held in Sri Lanka, 16-21 November 2024

#### 4.2 Americas

- ICA endorsed and participated at the Regional Cartographic Conference CAGIS-UCGIS Columbus, 3-6 June 2024
- ISPRS held Symposium of the Technical Commission III together with SELPER Brazil in Belém, Brazil, 4-8 November 2024
- OSGeo organized of The FOSS4G (Free Open Source for Geospatial) 2024 in Belém, Brazil, 2-8 December 2024
- OSGeo with OpenStreetMap organized SotM LATAM 2024 in Belém, Brazil, 7-8 December 2024
- OSGeo with QGIS PSC organized QGIS LATAM 2024 in Belém, Brazil, 7 December 2024

#### 4.3 Arab States

- ICA participated in 12th Plenary meeting in Jeddah, 6-8 February 2025
- ISPRS Geospatial Week 2025 in Dubai, 6-11 April 2025

#### 4.4 Europe

- ICA organized the EuroCarto, Vienna, Austria, 9-11 September 2024

#### 4.5 Africa

- ISPRS organized the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference & Exhibition on Advanced Geospatial Science & Technology (TeaGeo 2024) in Tunis Tunisia, 22-24 October 2024
- Andre Nonguierma, ISPRS Regional Representative for Africa, gave a keynote speech at the African Association of Remote Sensing for the Environment conference in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 4-8 November 2024

### 5. The GS involvement in the UN-GGIM Working Groups

- **UN-IGIF Integrated Geospatial Information Framework:** ICA contributed to Anticipated Capacity Building Activities and to the book on IGIF.
- **IAEG-SDGS:** ICA participated to the Mapping the SDGs book
- **Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters:** ICA participated to the Commission on Cartography in Early Warning and Crisis Management
- **Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information:** ICA participates to the Commission on Integrated Geospatial Information for Cartography
- **Policy and Legal Framework:** IGU (Dr. Pankaj Kumar) regularly participates in the monthly meeting of International Data Policy Committee (IDPC) for preparing various policy framework for promoting principles, policies and practices for FAIR Data. In November 2024, ISPRS and SELPER signed the Belém Declaration on behalf of the international remote sensing community, to constitutes a statement and a roadmap for the represented scientific and professional community in sight of the next Conference of the Parties (CoP30) to be hosted in 10-21 November 2025 in Belém, Brazil.
- **Geodesy:** IAG is a Partner Organization of the UN-GGIM Subcommittee on Geodesy and a Member of its Working Group on Capacity and Education and Member of the subcommittee on Geodesy Working Group on Capacity and Education. FIG has a representative in this sub-committee (Ryan Keenan, Chair of FIG Commission 5).
- **Marine Geospatial Information:** FIG/IHO/ICA lead the International Board on Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers (IBSC)
- **Toponymy:** ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy participates actively to this working Group which is joined to ISC.
- **Land administration:** FIG Commission 7 is in involved in the working group on Land Administration and in the development of FELA.

## 6. The GS engagement to participate to the actions of the UN-GGIM IGIF

During the Fifth plenary meeting of the HLG-IGIF and meeting of the Bureau and its Expanded Bureau, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 2 - 4 February 2025, the Geospatial societies defined five items that meet their competences to assist UN-GGKIC:

- UN-IGIF Communications Materials
- Communications Strategy
- Geospatial Leadership Training
- Capacity Building Workshops
- UN-IGIF Training for Trainers

They are now working on their coordination to meet the needs of the UN-IGIF and will communicate it to the responsible bodies of these tasks (UN-GGKIC) to implement this support.

## 7. The finalized interactive map of GEO-AI training centres

The GS launched a **survey on the main training centres of the World on Geo-AI in Spring 2024**. The results were put in 2025 on an interactive map that will be easily regularly completed and updated:

<https://gse-unil.github.io/un-ggim-gs/>

## 8. The GS members' webinars on Geospatial Information and methodologies

Members of GS that are also members of ISC (International Science Council) GeoUnions, organize individually or collectively the following webinar series:

- ISC GeoUnions [Distinguish lecture series](#)
- [ISDE Lectures on Digital Earth](#)
- Joint webinar of ICA, IMIA, and others on ['Trust in Mapping'](#)
- ISPRS Student Consortium [webinar series](#)
- ISC CODATA podcast on [Open Geo AI](#)

At FIG Working Week 2025 in Brisbane, Australia, UN-GGIM topics were included in many sessions. Former strategic advisor and Secretariat lead, Greg Scott gave a plenary presentation.

One of the goals in the future of the Geospatial Societies is to better promote and share these webinars with the UN-GGIM members making them available on the [Geospatial Societies website](#).

## 9. Perspectives for the future involvement of the Geospatial Societies in the UN-GGIM

The GS members are now better organized to contribute more actively to the UN-GGIM actions. While The GS was initially built with personalities who participated to the foundations of the UN-GGIM in 2011, newcomer representatives obtained more information on the different WGs and actions to choose their priorities for their future involvement according to the competences they can offer. Therefore, we entirely revised our terms of Reference.

## 10. New Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Geospatial Societies

Geospatial societies have adopted new terms of reference, redefining their organization, coordination and shared visions, actions, and missions to better meet the needs of the UN-GGIM evolving strategy.

# Geospatial Societies

## Terms of Reference

*August 2025 – 15<sup>th</sup> Session*

### Background

Recognizing the critical role of geospatial information in global development and prosperity, particularly for developing nations and vulnerable communities, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in July 2011 (ECOSOC Resolution 2011/24). Since its inception, UN-GGIM has engaged academic, research, professional, and private sector stakeholders to advance the global use of geospatial information for evidence-based decision-making, including monitoring the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information, issued at the Third UN-GGIM High-Level Forum in 2014, emphasized global, regional, and national collaboration in geospatial information management. It underscored the importance of partnerships among intergovernmental organizations, international NGOs, academia, and industry to support this global effort.

### Establishment

Acknowledging the need for more systematic representation of geospatial societies in the UN-GGIM proceedings, the UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies (UN-GGIM GS), formerly the Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies (JBGIS) was established as one of three networks formally recognized by the UN-GGIM alongside the Academic Network, Private Sector Network, and UN Geospatial Network.

### Vision

The UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies seek to support and enhance the work program of the UN-GGIM and the SDGs to enable and secure a better world for future generations.

### Mission

In this perspective, the UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies network leverages collaborations, amplify activities and messages in relation to geospatial science, technology, knowledge and governance by proposing, developing, including advocacy, that support and enhance the work program of the UN-GGIM.

### Goals

The goals of UN-GGIM-Geospatial Societies are to:

- Provide a unified voice in international geospatial affairs.
- Assist in coordinating activities among global geospatial organizations.
- Support UN-GGIM objectives through advocacy, training, capacity building and research & development.

### Tasks

Key Tasks of UN-GGIM-GS Members are:

#### Strategic Guidance and Coordination

- Advising UN-GGIM on strategy, knowledge, and capacity-building efforts.
- Coordinating international activities and projects aligned with UN-GGIM's mission.
- Providing a forum for coordination and dialogue among geospatial societies.
- Identifying relevant societies for specific geospatial topics and initiatives.

#### Capacity Building and Training

- Providing training and resources to enhance the geospatial capabilities of member nations.

- Supporting capacity development through workshops, training modules, and knowledge-sharing initiatives.
- Collaborating with UN Centres of Excellence (Bonn, Deqing, Riyadh) on capacity-building activities.
- Promoting geospatial education, research, and the development of new technologies and methodologies.

#### **Collaboration and Partnerships**

- Strengthening collaboration among governments, academia, and the private sector.
- Encouraging cooperation between geospatial societies and national counterparts.
- Facilitating knowledge exchange through best practices, case studies, and success stories.
- Connecting local society members with national representatives to address geospatial challenges.

#### **Geospatial Data, Standards, and Research**

- Promoting the adoption of metadata standards and spatial data quality improvements.
- Encourage the applications of geospatial standards and data interoperability.
- Supporting open data initiatives for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) analyses.
- Leading technological advancements and research in geospatial information.
- Recognizing the FAIR principles in data stewardship.

#### **Policy Advocacy and Awareness**

- Advising on data governance, policy frameworks, and legal aspects of geospatial information.
- Promoting awareness of the value of geospatial data in addressing global challenges.
- Advocating geospatial standards and their integration into national and international policies.

#### **Global Representation and Coordination**

- Advocate for the UN-GGIM at regional and global forums related to any topics related to geospatial information.
- Distributing participation across regional and thematic UN-GGIM meetings and activities.
- Coordinating the Societies' actions in UN-GGIM with the other UN-GGIM networks (Academia, private sector and UN Network).
- Planning and coordinating participation of the societies in UN-GGIM and other UN-related events.

### **Membership**

UN-GGIM-GS is a coalition of the Presidents, Secretaries-General or equivalent office bearers or their nominees, that lead recognized international organizations involved in the coordination, development, research, training, management, standardization or regulation of geospatial information and related matters.

The UN-GGIM-GS may invite representatives of relevant organizations to join. Any new member organization must be a recognized international organization. Membership of UN-GGIM-GS places no obligations on the organizations that members represent. There are no membership fees, and members are expected to bear their own costs.

Any new membership should be accepted at the majority of the present UN-GGIM societies during a meeting where the new society presents its motivations and capacities. Once a new society is accepted by the members, the executive body informs the UN-GGIM secretariat which approves it, and the website is updated.

### **Structure**

The **Executive Body** consists of one Chair and two Deputy Chairs, appointed on a rotational basis following the alphabetical order of the Societies. To ensure continuity, one of the deputy chairs is the former chair,

and the other deputy chair is the incoming one. The Federation of Surveyors (FIG) serves as the current administrative office.

## Members

- IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society (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 – Committee on Data (ISC-CODATA)
- International Society for Digital Earth (ISDE)
- International Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS)
- International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG)
- The Open-Source Geospatial Foundation (OSGeo)

## Network management

The UN-GGIM-GS Executive body manages the network with the following roles:

- The Chair is elected bi-annually and may serve two years with an option of a third year.
- The new Chair's term starts at the beginning of the formal annual session of the UN-GGIM Committee of Experts.
- The Chair represents UN-GGIM GS after consulting with members.
- The Executive body proposes each year a program that is discussed by the societies, and that is coordinated with the other networks and with the UN-GGIM secretary.
- The Executive body monitors the progress of the planned program.
- The Executive body plans the UN-GGIM GS meetings during the UN-GGIM Committee of Experts and for the whole year between two annual Committee of Experts.
- The Executive body collects in advance the UN-GGIM GS statements for the General Assembly and coordinates their interventions to avoid the multiplication of statements.
- Every year, the Executive body fills the report of the UN-GGIM GS for the General Assembly, in consultation with the members but not restricted to a compilation of individual societies' reports. Rather they establish the consistency of UN-GGIM GS as a whole network.
- The current administrative office (FIG) manages the website and the online activity schedule of the members.

## Participation of the members

UN-GGIM-GS participation guidelines are as follows:

- Each member informs the other ones and the current administrative office on its main events related to Geospatial information or related areas.
- Each member informs the Executive body of its participation to UN-GGIM's actions and groups to establish the annual report.
- Each member may be accompanied by one colleague at meetings.
- Decisions are made by consensus or majority vote when required.
- Membership details are publicly available on the UN-GGIM GS website.

## Meetings

- The network meets at least once annually, typically during the UN-GGIM Committee of Experts meeting.

- Additional meetings may coincide with major geospatial conferences.
- Several online meetings are organized during the year between the UN-GGIM Committee of Experts meetings to coordinate the participation of the societies to the UN-GGIM actions and groups and to develop specific projects.
- English is the working language for all meetings.

### **Ad hoc Working groups**

UN-GGIM GS may establish temporary working groups to address specific geospatial projects or issues. Each working group operates under defined objectives and a set timeframe, with members appointed based on expertise.