

United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management in Africa (UN-GGIM: Africa)

Summary Report of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa (UN-GGIM: Africa)

This report outlines activities carried out since the seventh session of the UN-GGIM. It includes actions taken as a follow-up of resolutions adopted and other activities considered as being of interest to Member States and partners.

1. Activities, Areas of Work – Achievements

The Third Meeting of the Regional Committee of UN-GGIM: Africa was held as a parallel event with the AfricaGIS 2017 Conference held from 20-24 November 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting was attended by over 50 participants, including delegates from 14 African countries, as well as observers from international organizations including the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the UN-GGIM Secretariat, academia, industry organizations and the private sector.

The meeting offered the opportunity to officially launch the African Action Plan on Global Geospatial Information Management. The document entitled Geospatial information for sustainable development in Africa (GI4SD), conceptualizes the overarching principle of holistic geospatial governance that strengthens the significance of geospatial information for sustainable development goals in Africa. It outlines the essential actions with related responsibilities, timescales and costs that will steer the future implementation of the initiative in Africa. Through the Action Plan, Member States have agreed on a basic set of concepts, practices, standards and guidelines for the development and management of geospatial information in Africa. It's worth noting that Africa is the first region that has developed an action plan under the auspices of UN-GGIM.

As pre-events to the regional committee meeting, two workshops were organized.

AFREF: The 2nd Meeting of the AFRFE Working Group. UN-GGIM: Africa has continued to develop the Unified African Geodetic Reference Frame (AFREF) programme, a regional geodetic reference frame, aligned with the Global Geodetic Reference Frame. AFREF allows for the direct and seamless application of all geospatial information on the continent. During an expert group meeting held 20th to 24th November 2017, the objectives and structure of the programme was revisited, the distribution of the Continuously Operationd Reference Stations (CORS) in Africa assessed, and the African Geodetic Commission was established.

Standards: UN-GGIM: Africa advocates the development and use of common geospatial data standards in Africa, in order to facilitate the harmonizing of geo-information in decision-making. With support from ECA, The Regional Committee has developed a guiding document on key



geospatial standards for Africa. The document provides some guiding principles on geospatial standards that can be used by national mapping agencies as a reference for strengthening the harmonization of fundamental geospatial datasets in Africa, including the common standards and metadata that would make statistical and geospatial information more useable and more relevant to a wider range of stakeholders. The document was reviewed during the expert group meeting organized by the Working Group on Fundamental Data Sets and Standards.

African Geospatial Policies: Pursuant the resolution made by UN-GGIM: Africa Third Session held in Côte d’Ivoire in 2016, ECA has provided a support to develop a background paper on the dimensions of geospatial information overarching policies in Africa. Because UN-GGIM: Africa is designed as an intergovernmental statutory organ of African nations, a comprehensive policy and strategy is a prerequisite in achieving a better coordination mechanism for geospatial information management. The document, outlining the common geospatial vision, strategy and goals for Africa, was circulated and tabled for comments. The participants made some recommendations to enhance the overall quality of the document in terms of structure and content; and review it to ensure internal and policy consistency with other African strategies.

Geoinformation Data, Products and Services: The global administrative data and second administrative level boundaries (SALB) have been updated with validated data provided by several countries including Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa, and South Sudan. All data were processed and included in the SALB global Platform for World administrative data.

2. Capacity Development

The global community has emphasized the need to support developing countries, mainly member states of UN-GGIM: Africa, in building their capacity in the production and dissemination of reliable and timely geospatial information. Therefore, even more effort must be made to continue to lessen the gap between the developed and developing countries so that “*No one is left behind*”. During the reporting cycle the following initiatives have been undertaken at the Regional level.

1. With the Support of the UN-GGIM Secretariat, the Regional Committee has organized an international Workshop on Fundamental Geospatial Datasets for Monitoring Sustainable Development Goals on 25-27 April 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Workshop provided a unique opportunity for members of the statistical and geospatial data communities in Africa to exchange knowledge and experiences, and to strengthen cooperation towards the implementation of the internationally agreed Global Fundamental Data Themes as a framework to foster efforts to improve the availability, accessibility and application of geospatial information in support of sustainable development in Africa.
2. Technical assistance was provided to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (also known by its French acronym, UEMOA) to develop the Geospatial Data Infrastructure (RGDI), an umbrella of policies, procedures and the technology to enhance more efficient production, management and use of geospatial data for the member countries.

3. Partnerships, Regional & International Collaboration

In addition to its involvement and participation in various activities related to UN-GGIM, UN-GGIM: Africa continues to be fully involved in the following major regional initiatives.

African Union Commission's Programme: Provision of advisory services to establish a Policy Coordination and Advisory Committee (PCAC) to oversee and steer the GMES Action Plan to ensure that it responds to global needs and is linked with other global initiatives such as the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) and UN-GGIM: Africa.

GEOSS: Contribution to the implementation of AfriGEOSS, an initiative to strengthen the link between the current GEO activities with existing capabilities and initiatives in Africa.

4. Perspectives/Outlook, Future Plans

The region plans to organize the fourth meeting of UN-GGIM: Africa in conjunction with the StatCom Africa Meeting. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for 1st to 4th October 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The fourth session will continue to discuss on issues related to sharing knowledge and best practices on the development of geospatial information in the continent; raise awareness on the benefits to be derived through the utilization of geospatial information for sustainable development; look at policies, measures and steps that African countries could take to ensure a successful implementation of the UN-GGIM initiative in the region.

5. Matters/Issues for Consideration

One of the most critical challenge facing the regional body is the insufficiency of financial resources to adequately implement and track progress of the UN-GGIM: Africa activities.

Additionally, there is an inadequate engagement from Member States and lack of shared political will to support UN-GGIM: Africa activities both at national and regional level. For instance, the conveners of some of the Working Groups (Institutional Arrangements and Legal Frameworks Working Group; Capacity and Capability Development Working Group; Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Information Working Group) were not in attendance and were not able to provide progress report of their activities.

With regard to standards and interoperability, the meeting has recognized that the participation of the African regional and specialized institutions, as well as member States in ISO/TC211 was so far relatively poor. Therefore, UN-GGIM: Africa would like to take the bull by the horns so as to create a mechanism to disseminate the relevant standards to the African geospatial community.

Communication is key to a successful implementation of the UN-GGIM: Africa's activities. The Regional Committee will endeavor to carry out an awareness campaign for geospatial professional, everyday users, with particular priority given to government leadership levels. In the interim, the Executive Board is hard at work to completing the building of the UN-GGIM: Africa Website, which shall be released before the next meeting tentatively scheduled in October 2018.