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Geospatial information and services for disasters

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report prepared by the Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its seventh session, held in New York from 2 to 4 August 2017, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 7/110, in which it welcomed the report of the Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters and commended the work and effort of the Working Group in refining the then draft Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters, inclusive of the inputs from the global consultation. Also in decision 7/110, the Committee adopted the Strategic Framework as a guide for Member States in their respective national activities to ensure the availability and accessibility of quality geospatial information and services across all phases of the emergency cycle, and as a means to reach out and engage with decision makers, and endorsed the consideration of drafting a resolution presenting the Strategic Framework for adoption by the Economic and Social Council. In addition, the Committee expressed support for the proposal of the Working Group to develop an assessment tool to assist Member States and the regional committees of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management to evaluate and develop their respective implementation plans and to monitor and report progress on the implementation of the Strategic Framework. In this report, the Working Group provides information on its intersessional activities, including the preparation of the draft resolution on the Strategic Framework, informal consultations with representatives of permanent missions to the United Nations, led by Jamaica and the Philippines, and the promotion of the Strategic Framework in international forums.

* E/C.20/2018/1

I. Introduction

1. The importance of developing a Strategic Framework for Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters is deeply rooted in the increasing need for geospatial information and services in disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), as evidenced by recent large-scale disaster events. The devastation by typhoons, cyclones and hurricanes, and epidemics such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, heightened the challenges and existence of gaps related to the availability and accessibility of quality geospatial information, as well as the coordination and collaboration among all the stakeholders involved in the provision of geospatial information across all phases of disaster management cycle. The Committee of Experts has recognized the need to address these challenges, which led to the adoption of decision 5/110¹ at its fifth session, and the creation of the Working Group with Jamaica and the Philippines as Co-chairs.

2. The Working Group's scope of work is to develop a strategic framework that brings all stakeholders and partners involved in DRRM together to ensure that the necessary geospatial information and services are available, of quality, and accessible in a coordinated way for decision making and operations prior to, during and post disasters. Its current membership comprises 46 experts from Member States, the United Nations system, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector.

3. The Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters was prepared by the Working Group on a participatory basis over a period of two years. It is a guiding policy document to be used by countries to assist them in mitigating the impact of disasters using geospatial information. The Strategic Framework provides a platform for the integration of spatial and non-spatial data sets in DRRM, and unites communities of users to promote dialogue, collaboration and innovation concerning interoperability and harmonization of data standards. It also addresses the pressing need for strengthened coordination between governments and international humanitarian responders, particularly during disaster response, and calls for the necessary quality geospatial information and services to be available and accessible in a coordinated way for decision-making and operations before, during and after disasters. The Strategic Framework is strongly aligned with relevant global policy frameworks including, but not limited to, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework. The Strategic Framework also subscribes to the concepts of open data and national spatial data infrastructure.

4. At its seventh session in August 2017, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 7/110, in which it welcomed the report of the Working Group, commended the Working Group's effort in refining the draft Strategic Framework, inclusive of the inputs from the global consultation, and its efforts to communicate the draft Strategic Framework at international conferences and fora. At its seventh session, the Committee of Experts adopted the 'Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters', and endorsed the consideration of drafting a resolution presenting the Strategic Framework for adoption by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

¹ E/2015/46-E/C.20/2015/17 (Report on the Fifth Session)

5. The present report highlights the activities of the Working Group including the preparation of a draft resolution, and the conduct of informal consultations in preparation for the adoption of the Strategic Framework by ECOSOC. The report also highlights the development of an assessment tool to assist Member States to evaluate and develop their respective national implementation plans, and to monitor and report progress on the use of the Strategic Framework. Also included in the report is the promotion of the Strategic Framework in international forums, and the future activities of the Working Group. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report and to express its views on the way forward for geospatial information and services for disasters. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 21.

II. Activities of the Working Group

Drafting of the ECOSOC resolution

6. Following the Committee of Experts' decision 7/110,² in which it endorsed consideration for the drafting of a resolution presenting the Strategic Framework for adoption by ECOSOC, a pre-zero draft resolution was prepared by the co-Chairs of the Working Group, and circulated among members of the Working Group in early 2018 for consultation and inputs.

7. The Working Group has a diverse membership; hence a range of responses and recommendations were received that focused on core elements and technical aspects of the Strategic Framework. These responses were consolidated and used to revise the pre-zero draft resolution, which was then submitted to the Bureau of the Committee of Experts for its review and confirmation. The zero-draft resolution was submitted to the Permanent Missions of Jamaica and the Philippines on 28 March 2018. With sufficient support from Member States to have the Strategic Framework adopted, the Permanent Missions of Jamaica and the Philippines undertook to lead the consultation process. The process from this stage forward was managed by the Permanent Missions.

8. The two Permanent Missions convened informal consultations in May and June 2018. Following these consultations, the draft resolution and Annex 'Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters' were submitted by the Permanent Missions of Jamaica and the Philippines to the Secretariat of ECOSOC. The draft resolution, E/2018/L.15, was tabled by the Philippines, under agenda item 18 (i) "Economic and environmental questions: Geospatial Information" at the ECOSOC Coordination and Management Meeting on Monday 2nd July 2018.

9. The draft resolution was adopted by ECOSOC at that time, and is presently available in all six official languages of the United Nations on the Working Group's webpage.³

Development of an Assessment Tool

10. The Committee of Experts, in its decision 7/110, also supported the Working Group's proposal to develop an assessment tool to assist Member States in evaluating the status of implementation of the Strategic Framework, and to monitor and report the progress of such implementation.

11. The assessment tool aims to gauge the level of implementation of identified activities in every priority area for action defined in the Strategic Framework. The

² E/2017/46-E/C/20/2017/18: http://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/7th-Session/documents/GGIM-7_Report_e.pdf

³ Webpage of Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters: <http://ggim.un.org/UNGGIM-wg5/>

Working Group plans to seek the Committee of Experts approval before the assessment tool will be made available to Member States to conduct their respective national assessments.

Promotion of the Strategic Framework in International Forums

12. To increase awareness on the Strategic Framework and support the effort of the Working Group to have the resolution adopted by ECOSOC, the Co-Chairs participated in and presented the Strategic Framework in several international forums.

13. At the sixth plenary meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP) in Kumamoto City, Japan, held from 16-19 October 2017, the Philippines, as one of the Vice Chairs of UN-GGIM-AP Working Group 2 - Disaster Risk Management (UN-GGIM-AP: WG2), noted that the activities of the UN-GGIM-AP: WG2 were consistent with the Working Group at the global level. UN-GGIM-AP: WG2 in its development of a guideline, is working towards mobilizing the technical and administrative capacities of national geospatial information agencies in the Asia and the Pacific region to implement disaster risk reduction measures in accordance with the Sendai Framework. The Strategic Framework serves as a policy guide in identifying potential areas of contribution of national geospatial information authorities towards the effective implementation of the Sendai Framework

14. At the Fifth High Level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management in Mexico City, Mexico, from 28-30 November 2017, Jamaica presented the Strategic Framework at the session on integrated information systems: a national priority for implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Forum aimed to strengthen the geospatial information management capacities of Member States in implementing the SDGs. It afforded over 300 participants from 73 Member States the unique opportunity to exchange knowledge, practices and experiences on geospatial technology and innovation.

15. During the Fifth High Level Forum, the complementarity between the Strategic Framework and the SDGs was highlighted in terms of improved availability and accessibility of quality geospatial information in addressing disaster related goals in sustainable development. The presentation emphasized that the Strategic Framework provides a platform for the integration of spatial and non-spatial (e.g. statistical, humanitarian, etc.) datasets in supporting the SDGs. Case studies on the applicability and usefulness of the Strategic Framework in Dominica, Haiti, Jamaica, and the Philippines were also presented. The Forum also encouraged Member States and the DRRM community to support the implementation of the Strategic Framework. The participants acknowledged the work of the Working Group, and its effort to have the Strategic Framework endorsed by ECOSOC.

16. Further, during the Fifth High Level Forum, an informal meeting was convened with the Secretariat, the Working Group co-Chair from Jamaica, the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Secretariat, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), to discuss opportunities for closer collaboration between the Committee of Experts, GEO and UNISDR. The points of discussion focused on the following:

(a) Contributions to UNISDRs “Words into Action” Guidelines on risk information for the development of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in support of the Sendai Framework Global Target (e)⁴;

(b) Development of good practices on the use of geospatial information and Earth observations for disaster risk reduction decision-making in support of the Sendai Framework Global Target (g)⁵;

(c) Use of the assessment tool by Member States in monitoring the status of the implementation of the Strategic Framework; and

(d) Participation of the Working Group co-Chairs in the UNISDR expert group responsible for the preparation of the global risk assessment framework.

17. UNISDR also supported the decision to have an ECOSOC resolution to officially endorse the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters.

18. UNISDR, in a letter dated 23 January 2018, conveyed its appreciation to the co-Chairs for having the Strategic Framework adopted at the seventh session of the Committee of Experts, and the commitment to the implementation of the Sendai Framework. It highlighted the importance of the Framework, as it strives to optimize the benefits of using geospatial information and services by Member States and other concerned entities for disaster risk reduction and disaster management. UNISDR views the Working Group as an important partner in helping find ways to build capacities to implement and monitor the Sendai Framework.

Other activity

19. In order to reach a wider audience within the global DRRM community, the Working Group contributed a post on PreventionWeb that introduced the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters. Using this medium the Working Group raised awareness on the Strategic Framework by highlighting its alignment with the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015-2030 and its implication for the DRRM community.

III. Next Steps

20. The following are the continuing actions that will be undertaken by the Working Group:

(a) Continue to establish linkages with the Committee’s Expert and Working Groups, and Regional Committees, United Nations systems, and other international organizations to implement the Strategic Framework;

(b) Complete the assessment tool to support Member States to evaluate and develop their respective implementation plans. Subject to the guidance of the Committee of Experts, it will monitor and report the progress of implementation of the Strategic Framework; and

(c) Review and update the Working Group’s terms of reference.

⁴ Target (e): Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2010.

⁵ Target (g): Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030.

IV. Points for Discussion

21. The Committee is invited to:

(a) Take note of the present report, work and achievements of the Working Group, and express its views on the proposed next steps as outlined in paragraph 20 above;

(b) Take note that ECOSOC has adopted a resolution titled ‘Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters’ on 2 July 2018; and

(c) Urge Member States, the United Nations system, and relevant international organizations to implement the Strategic Framework nationally and regionally, and to continue to participate in the activities of the Working Group.