Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Contribution of regional committees and thematic groups to
the global geospatial information agenda**

United Nations System Network on geospatial information management

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Prepared by: United Nations System Network

I.   Introduction

1.   At its eighth session, held in New York from 1 to 3 August 2018, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 8/115, in which it welcomed the report of the Secretariat on the review of United Nations activities in geospatial information management. The Committee also reaffirmed the need for entities of the United Nations System [1] to work together effectively in the field of geospatial information management; with a view to streamlining activities, avoiding duplication, communicating coherently, avoiding unnecessary reporting burdens and supporting the Subcommittee of Geodesy, expert and working groups of the Committee of Experts, and to share knowledge, technology and resources provided by Member States. Additionally, the Committee requested the United Nations System Network to consolidate the functions of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and to have one efficient mechanism that would build upon the experiences of past coordination efforts and endorsed the Network's terms of reference.

2.   The present report presents an overview of the preparatory activities of the Network during the intersessional period, including detailing the progress and establishment of the Steering Group of the Network, development of a draft work plan, and further background for the proposed change of name to the "United Nations Geospatial Network".

II.   Preparatory activities

3.   Following the eighth session of the Committee of Experts in August 2018, a number of United Nations entities participated in a series of informal virtual meetings. These virtual meetings commenced discussion regarding the modalities of the establishment of the Network and its Steering Group and fostered: an increased awareness of ongoing activities in geospatial information management, Earth observations and other data sources; promoted the work and activities of the Committee of Experts; dialogue regarding technical cooperation, prevailing policies, and existing contracts within the United Nations.

4.   On 28 January 2019, the Secretariat, through the Office of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), requested all heads of departments of entities within the United Nations System to designate a representative and alternate representative of senior experts in the field of geospatial information management to participate in the Network, as per the Terms of Reference of the Network, to formally establish the members of the Network.

5.   By 30 April 2019, the Secretariat had received 25 nominations among 28 responses from the following entities with geospatial information capacities: Department of Safety and Security (DSS), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT), Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), International Seabed Authority (ISA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),

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[1] The term "entity" or "entities" hereinafter refers to offices, departments, regional commissions, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations System

United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and World Food Programme (WFP).

III. Establishment and composition of the Network

6. On 3 May 2019, at a virtual meeting of the Network, participants representing 13 United Nations entities agreed to establish expeditiously the Steering Group of the Network in preparation for its first plenary meeting on the margins of this ninth session of the Committee of Experts. The Secretariat convened a nomination process to select the Chair, Vice-Chairs, and members of the Steering Group. Nominations for the Steering Group were received from DSS, OICT, OLA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, FAO, ITU, UN-Habitat, UNITAR; nominations for the positions of Vice-Chair were received from OLA, UNFPA and UNICEF; and, nominations for the positions of Chair were received from OLA and UNEP.

7. On 30 May 2019, at a virtual meeting, convened specifically to select and establish the Steering Group, the Secretariat noted that there were more nominations for the Steering Group than envisaged by the Terms of Reference (which had been prepared more than one year earlier and without being able to foresee what the composition of the Steering Group may look like in the future). Subsequent discussions noted appreciation in the depth and breadth of the nominations and the willingness of nominees to immediately get to work. In considering that the Subcommittee of Geodesy, Expert and Working groups of the Committee of Experts operate under a similar inclusive approach, it was proposed to accept all of the nominations for the Steering Group and to establish the Steering Group of the Network with the composition of its members as tabled.

8. Subsequent discussions proposed that the Steering Group could consider the review of the Network's Terms of Reference to ensure that they are able to better reflect a more flexible approach to the membership of the Steering Group in future years, and to ensure that the goodwill and inclusiveness across the United Nations System is leveraged as much as possible.

9. The proposal to accept the nominations as tabled and establish the Network Steering Group was agreed unanimously by participants. Accordingly, the Network Steering Group is composed of:

Chair   Alexandre Caldas, UNEP;

Vice-Chairs Toby Wicks, UNICEF; and Lorant Czaran, UNFPA;

Members   DSS, OICT, OLA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, FAO, ITU, UN-Habitat, UNITAR, and the Secretariat of the Network.

10. The Chair of the Network was welcomed and subsequently expressed his gratitude and commitment to the new role, noting the Network's aspiration to expand its membership from 30 up to 60 in order to represent all United Nations entities of the United Nations System and for the Network to "Deliver as One". There was broad consensus regarding these sentiments. The Network agreed to prepare a draft work plan, which is annexed to this report in Annex 1 for the consideration of and guidance from the Committee. Furthermore, in considering mechanisms to promote the Network, it was decided to organize an open Side Event on the margins of this ninth session of the Committee of Experts, with the intention for the United Nations System Network to engage with Member States and other networks.

IV.   Activities and work ahead

11. The discussions of the Network on the use of satellite imagery and remote sensing in the United Nations were presented in the "Special report of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities on partnerships in the use and applications of space science and technology within the United Nations System"[2] in the context of the organization's mandates and programmes in the field of peace and security, sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction, environmental monitoring, census, health, education, drugs and crime, food security and refugees.

12. On 1 July, the Steering Group held a virtual meeting to discuss the draft work plan proposed by the Chair and Vice-Chairs. The Network will further review and endorse the draft work plan on the margins of the ninth session during the first plenary meeting of the Network. The Chair will present the draft work plan during the plenary of the ninth session of the Committee of Experts. The draft work plan is attached to the present report (see Annex 1) and subject to substantive modification based on discussions during the plenary. These modifications will in more detail prioritize, streamline timelines and resources for the activities of the Network in the biennium 2019-2021.

13. Furthermore, the Steering Group and the Chair considered how to enhance the potential outreach and simplify the promotion of the Network's activities and work in providing a clear and simple branding for the United Nations System. As such, the Steering Group proposed to rename the United Nations System Network on geospatial information management of the Committee of Experts to "United Nations Geospatial Network". This proposal was met by broad consensus within the Network and is presented to the Committee for its consideration.

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[2] A/AC.105/1200 http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/oosadoc/data/documents/2019/aac.105/aac.1051200_0.html

Work Plan 2019 – 2021 (DRAFT)

United Nations System Network on geospatial information management

Summary

The present paper contains the proposed work plan for the United Nations System Network on geospatial information management for the period from August 2019 to July 2021.

Work Plan 2019 – 2021

The Network will implement the following quick start activities towards achieving, in this period, the building of a "United Nations Geospatial Blueprint". These activities will be further complemented by three strategic objectives and corresponding transformational pathways and activities to achieve those objectives.

Towards a United Nations Geospatial Blueprint

The Network will continue its consultations and review of activities on geospatial information management within the United Nations System, in order to finalize a systematic overview of the existing geospatial resources, activities and governance arrangements of the United Nations System.

The Network will conduct series of activities toward a United Nations Geospatial Blueprint which will be the foundation building block for the consideration of strategies on communication, governance, knowledge, for the United Nations activities in geospatial information management. The Blueprint will serve as the point of reference of current activities, identify synergies for programmes, strategic orientations and cooperation.

Quick start activities for the 'Blueprint'

Mapping the United Nations System geospatial landscape. This "stock taking exercise" will conduct an overall review on current policies, mandates, geospatial personnel, data, infrastructure and resources on activities in the geospatial realms.

Output: Responses from United Nations entities of the Programme description templates

Evaluate and analyze the stock taking exercise responses and elaborate proposals for an overarching governance model on geospatial information management within the United Nations System, in accordance with existing mandates.

Output: Analysis matrix of geospatial responsibilities and data management by entities

Publish a concise resource of geospatial information management mandates and activities conducted by respective United Nations System entities to further document and raise awareness on these activities,

Output: Publication of responses on mandates and activities from the stock taking exercise

Prepare a comprehensive report, based on the stock taking exercise, on the "Blueprint of Geospatial activities in the United Nations" that includes strategic orientations and a proposed overarching governance model on geospatial information management within the United Nations System.

Output: Report on the "Blueprint of Geospatial activities in the United Nations System"

Strategic Objective 1
Building and strengthening the United Nations System Network

The Network will engage United Nations System entities that wish to participate as a member of the Network with a goal to grow membership of the Network from the entities of the United Nations System working in the field of geospatial information management.

The Network will *invite entities* not yet working in the field of geospatial information management to participate in its activities and proceedings, and the Network will further raise awareness on the use of geospatial information.

The Network will keep *a list of its members with the designated representatives and alternate representatives nominated by the heads of departments of entities within the United Nations System*, as per the Terms of Reference, to be maintained by the Secretariat. The list will be made available publicly through the web-platform.

The Network will further endeavor to maintain and consolidate *a database and mailing list of geospatial experts* (including consolidating previous lists from the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, UNGIWG), regularly updated by designated representatives for their respective entities, to facilitate communication to, and working level exchanges between, geospatial experts in the United Nations.

The Network will provide a *web-platform* for the United Nations System, within the UNite Connections environment, through which geospatial knowledge, education and training, community of practice, technology, data, needs, partnerships and collaborative arrangements with external entities can be shared, so as to avoid duplication and create synergies.

The Network will devise a *communication and outreach strategy* for the United Nations System Network.

Activities for strategic objective 1: Community engagement and communication

Prepare a comprehensive list of geospatial personnel including their specialization, entity and email through the designated/alternate representatives, to further the overall cooperation, bi and multi-lateral discussions between United Nations entities on geospatial information.

Output: Comprehensive list of geospatial personnel including specialty, entity and email

Identify clearly the bottlenecks and obstacles for coordination and coherence and the current fragmentation of geospatial capabilities and activities within the United Nations System: (i) an absence of geospatial capabilities; (ii) senior managers are not aware of the geospatial capabilities within their entity; or (iii) fragmentation of geospatial capabilities within the entity, making its identification difficult.

Output: As this is a permanent activity, the Network shall propose an *Action Plan,* to be updated yearly, presented to the annual Plenary meeting of the network

Review and adopt a web-platform to facilitate the dissemination and publication of relevant documentation to the Network and the wider geospatial community.

Output: Selection of a web-platform as knowledge and dissemination platform

Collect and compile relevant documentation on geospatial matters such as contracts, policies, agreements, frameworks, practices and reference manual, both internal to the United Nations as well as in the context of the work of the Committee of Experts, to be made available through the web-platform.

Output: Disseminate relevant documents provided by United Nations entities via the web-platform

Elaborate, discuss and conduct a communication strategy, including via iSeek, UNite Connections, or other platforms, and the public part of the web-platform, to raise awareness on geospatial information both within and outside the United Nations Systems, leveraging the UN-GGIM websites as appropriate.

Output: Initiate a branding strategy for the network including Network name, logo, slide decks, web content (public/private), news feed, tweeter and promotional videos

Strategic Objective 2
"Delivering (geospatial information) as One"

The Network will work to *consolidate the outcomes* of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG) with upcoming activities decided by the Network.

The Network will *foster collaboration* among United Nations System entities, including identifying and addressing overarching trends, shared interests and common topics in geospatial information management.

The Network will consider and recommend an *overarching governance model* on geospatial information management within the United Nations System, in accordance with existing mandates. This should be a major component of a United Nations System. The *Blueprint* will form the basis for the consideration and proposal of the governance model. This Strategy should have a specific section to address minority groups, youth, elderly populations and women.

The Network will maintain a *directory of updated geospatial tools, platforms and instruments* with relevance to be applied within the United Nations System as well as outside the United Nations System but with relevance to the Network.

The Network will establish appropriate *coordination mechanisms* with relevant Working Groups, Expert Groups and Networks of UN-GGIM to coordinate actions, practices and standardization activities on methods, tools and dissemination on geospatial information management.

The Network will support the consolidation and sustainability of institutional capabilities, resources and recognition of the expertise on geospatial information management, with the view to facilitate the understanding of the geospatial expertise by human resources and finance operations of the United Nations.

Activities for strategic objective 2: Geospatial data, governance, infrastructure and people

Identify and progress toward the pooling of geospatial infrastructure with due consideration to existing mandates, open source technologies, cloud computing, and hosting and United Nations policies.

Output: Identification of available services and infrastructure hosting or to host geospatial data, services, licenses or products (mid-term)

Identify and consider existing geospatial data and information produced and used in the United Nations toward the establishment of an overarching governance model on geospatial information management within the United Nations system, in accordance with existing activities and mandates.

Output: Preparation a report on *A Strategy towards sustainable geospatial information management* on data governance within the United Nations System

Conduct discussions toward the preparation of generic job description templates for geospatial professionals and support staff with the view to have a consolidated approach on human resource management for geospatial experts and facilitate recruitment, mobility and identification of geospatial experts.

Output: Generic job description templates and JO for geospatial jobs

Identify and consider existing geospatial activities and mandates of the United Nations System and activities of respective working groups, experts' groups, sub commission and networks of UN-GGIM with the view to maximize synergies between them.

Output: Establish thematic focal points in the United Nations System, based on current activities and mandates, to attend or participate to specific working groups of UN-GGIM

In each annual Plenary meeting of the United Nations System Network a number of demonstration projects should be selected as *Application of geospatial information management* within the United Nations System.

Output: A publication should be produced on the basis of these demonstration projects.

Strategic Objective 3
Partnerships and Capacity Development

The Network will maintain a directory of permanently updated *events, conferences, workshops and related activities* on geospatial information management within and outside the United Nations System but with relevance to the Network. (available through the web-platform)

The Network will organize regularly *on-line training and webinars*, through partnership with other Organizations, e.g. the Eye on Earth Alliance, the IEEE Computer Society, academic network, on-line resources outreaching in areas of global geospatial information management.

The Network should explore the need for a Champion, chosen within the United Nations System with potential for global overarching presence in the area of Global Geospatial Information Management, who will serve on a biannual basis, in coordination with the Chair and Steering Committee, as 'The Ambassador' for the United Nations System Network.

Activities for strategic objective 3: Promoting partnerships, capacity development and public awareness

Organize and coordinate events/venues targeted at raising awareness on geospatial activities toward the senior management of the United Nations and facilitate the organization and advertisement of events, trainings, capacity development and education opportunities related to geospatial information conducted, organized or attended by the United Nations system

Output: Joint participation or organization of events

Act as broker on capacity development to assess needs from Member States and international organizations and capacity development capabilities on geospatial information management in the United Nations system

Output: List of capacity development capabilities in the United Nations and "wish list" of support from Member States

Promote the coordination of activities with earth observation and satellite imagery networks and entities, in the areas of data systems, acquisition, processing and distribution of geospatial data, e.g. the Committee on Earth Observing Satellites (CEOS), the CEOS Satellite Data Coordination Group (SDCG) and the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), as well as UN-Space, and other United Nations System official networks

Output: Establish coordination mechanisms with those entities

Promote the coordination of activities with other non-GGIM thematic groups but interrelated in scope and mandates. For instance, the CCSA (Committee for Coordination of Statistical Activities) and/or CCS-UN (Committee of Chief Statisticians –

UN). These groups are definitely involved in geospatial information management (e.g. geospatial in Population Censuses, use of GIS data for official statistics), among other interrelated activities.

Output: Establish coordination mechanisms with those entities

Conduct fund raising activities, based on agreed overarching data governance and related implementation priorities

Output: Outreach, presentation and fund-raising activities including with Permanent Missions to the United Nations

Facilitate and advocate for partnerships and joint promotion of activities on geospatial information management between the United Nations System and relevant international organizations, academia, private sector and societies, in particular in collaboration with the relevant UN-GGIM networks.

Output: Report presented to the annual Plenary meeting of the Network with regard to joint promotion of activities