

Summary of UN-GGIM – International Bar Association (IBA) Workshop

Date: February 27, 2014

Location: Offices of Taylor Wessing, LLP in London.

Attendees: Representatives from UN-GGIM, International Bar Association, the Centre for Spatial Law and Policy and approximately twenty (20) geospatial representatives from industry, government and NGO's across Europe participated in the workshop.

Summary: Dr. Vanessa Lawrence CB, co-Chair of the UN-GGIM began the workshop by providing some background on the role, responsibility and mandate of the UN-GGIM. She noted that the Rio+20 meeting in Brazil referenced the importance of geospatial information and summarized the results of the Cambridge Conference 2013 and the UN-GGIM3 Committee of Experts meeting. She discussed how the work of the UN-GGIM was being guided by an Inventory of Issues that had been prepared by the UN-GGIM Secretariat and that the UN-GGIM had recently published the report "Future Trends in Geospatial Information Management" which included a section on legal and policy issues.

Mr. Kevin Pomfret, from the Centre for Spatial Law and Policy discussed the work of the UN-GGIM on how policy and legal frameworks impact geospatial information management. He discussed the rapid growth of geospatial data and its uses, and stated that the geospatial community could be broadly grouped into three categories: (i) government, (ii) industry and (iii) universities, citizens, and NGOs. These groups are both users and providers of data, often simultaneously, and so are concerned with many of the same legal and policy issues, such as licensing, privacy, liability, security and open data. As a result, policies or laws that affect the collection, impact, and distribution in one segment of the community will often impact the other segments. As a result, traditional approaches are becoming obsolete and could be detrimental to the geospatial community as a whole. He also stated that the UN-GGIM could play an important role in the development of appropriate legal and policy frameworks by helping identify local solutions to these issues so that geospatial information can be used to address global issues.

Mr Christopher Rees and Mr. Kevin Madders introduced the International Bar Association (IBA) and their work on the proposed Convention on Geoinformation. They explained that the IBA, a collection of lawyers from around the globe, has been looking at the increasingly important role that information plays in society. They stated that currently the law relating to information is grounded in single jurisdictions. However information is increasingly traded across boundaries, and they believe as a result a different approach may be needed. Mr. Rees and Mr. Madders added that they believe lawyers could provide solutions to real problems in this area. However it should be remembered that this is a very new area for lawyers, and that industry is asking for lawyers to create solutions to problems which have not existed in the past. With the help of the IBA, Mr. Rees and Mr. Madders prepared the proposed Convention on Geoinformation as a "straw man". They hoped that they might work with the UN-GGIM to use the draft to craft a solution. They explained one of the biggest problems will be to define the term "geoinformation".

Lengthy discussions followed on the main legal and policy issues relating to geospatial information. Issues discussed included provenance, liability, re-use, and open data and security. A number of the participants agreed that the issues were universal, but expressed concern in trying to address them within a single framework, such as the Convention. Others stated that it would be very difficult to come up with universally agreed upon terminology and vocabulary or to map the Convention with existing legal and policy

frameworks. Some believed that the Convention could lead to unnecessary regulation, but that it might be useful in developing guiding principles for the geospatial community.

The participants then discussed what trends were driving the legal and policy issues that would impact geospatial information management. The participants identified several important trends, including the growth in social/local/mobile applications, concerns over privacy/data protection and the European Union's space policy.

Mr. Greg Scott of the UN-GGIM Secretariat discussed the role the UN-GGIM could play going forward. Mr. Scott stated the first step was for the Secretariat to report back to the UN on the results and discussions of this meeting. Mr. Rees indicated that the private sector that would be interested in rationalizing these issues as well and could provide funding.

The participants then discussed potential next steps. Most agreed that dialogue on these issues should continue, particularly since these issues will be new to many nations. Dr. Lawrence stated that since the IBA's draft Convention is not an official UN document it cannot be presented to UN Member States at GGIM4. Mr. Scott stated that a summary of the meeting would be included in the report to the Committee and that a side event on legal and policy issues could be held at UN-GGIM4 to discuss these issues.