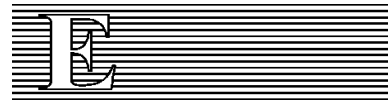




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United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial
Information Management in Africa (UN-GGIM: Africa)

First session

Tunisia, Tunis,
10-12 December 2014

Concept Note

I. Background

1. At its substantive session of 2011, following extensive consultation with geospatial experts from Member States, the Economic and Social Council considered the report of the Secretary General on global geospatial information management (E/2011/89) and adopted resolution 2011/24 to create the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. The United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) was established to create a formal geospatial information coordination mechanism involving Member States as the key stakeholders.

2. In August 2011, the African Preparatory Meeting for Global Geospatial Information Management recommended that Member States, ECA and the African Union Commission finalize and implement an African Action Plan on Geospatial Information Management to meet the specifically African elements of global needs.

3. The third session of the Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (CODIST) took place from 12 to 15 March 2013 and resolved that:

(a) The oversight and supervisory functions of the subcommittee on geo-information (CODIST-Geo) be transferred to an equivalent subcommittee of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom Africa) with the name of UN-GGIM: Africa; and

(b) African countries should participate in and contribute to the work of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

A. Objectives

4. The Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management aims to provide a leading role in setting the agenda for the development of global geospatial information, and to promote the use of that information to tackle key global challenges. It affords a forum to liaise and coordinate among Member States, and between Member States and international organizations.

B. Regional entities

5. As UN-GGIM has developed over the previous three years, regional entities have been established to deal with relevant issues and support development of the initiative. These include UN-GGIM Asia-Pacific, UN-GGIM Americas, UN-GGIM Arab States and UN-GGIM Europe, leaving Africa as the only populated area not covered by a regional UN-GGIM entity, particularly after CODIST-Geo was disbanded in 2013.

6. ECA is therefore organizing the inaugural session of UN-GGIM: Africa to:

(a) Discuss the critical aspects and agree on a basic set of concepts, practices, standards and guidelines for establishing a subset of UN-GGIM in Africa (UN-GGIM: Africa); and

(b) Review and validate the draft African Action Plan on Geospatial Information Management being prepared by ECA in conjunction with Member States.

II. Justification

7. The need for a global UN-GGIM has been firmly established. The reasons for the necessity of the regional entity UN-GGIM: Africa are many, ranging from global issues and concerns to regional, national, local and individual needs.

A. Global

8. Geospatial information is required to deal with numerous issues, including – but certainly not limited to – climate change, travel and trade, population predictions, health, food production and security, refugees, terrorism, and piracy. To understand, appreciate and respond to these topics, it is essential to have common global frameworks and interoperable global datasets. No single country or organization is capable of attaining these on its own, and therefore collaboration and cooperation are essential.

B. Regional

9. At the regional or continental level, the issues are the same as at the global level, but also include border demarcation, water resource distribution, conflicts, security, development, poaching, land degradation, disaster management and many others.

C. National and local

10. At the national and local levels, all of the above issues are relevant, as are the following: population movements (internal and external), land use, deforestation and erosion, social policies, infrastructure development, education, demographics, food security, land tenure, disaster preparedness, and e-governance. Each level of geospatial information feeds into the higher levels and therefore all levels need to be consistent.

III. Current situation

11. The state of geospatial information is at varying levels of development within the 54 countries of Africa. There have been numerous programmes over many years on the regional, national and local scales to develop this information, many of them focused on capacity-building, but most have not been maintained or sustained. This lack of sustainability may be attributed to a number of factors, including deficiencies of the following: political will, perception of need, education levels and funding.

12. At the institutional level, despite a number of initiatives, including CODIST-Geo, there is no permanent coordinating body for the progress and standardization of geospatial information within Africa. It is noteworthy that, at its final meeting in March 2013, CODIST-Geo recommended the establishment of UN-GGIM: Africa.

IV. The way forward and challenges

13. The work carried out by CODIST-Geo provides a platform from which to move forward. That effort will not be lost with the establishment of and support for an effective UN-GGIM: Africa. The progression of geospatial information benefiting Africans at every level and contributing to a global perspective requires cohesive and coordinated efforts. This can be

achieved by implementation of UN-GGIM, supported by every African country. Five challenges which must be met include consensus, political will, leadership, funding and sustainability.

14. ECA is committed to initiating the process by hosting the inaugural session of UN-GGIM: Africa, in conjunction with StatCom Africa, in Tunis from 10 to 12 December 2014. It is critical that as many African countries as possible are represented at this meeting to gain consensus and drive the political will.

V. Meeting objectives, format and outcomes

15. The primary objective of the meeting is to discuss, adopt and endorse a regional body charter to coordinate UN-GGIM activities in Africa. It is hoped that Member States will agree with transferring the functions of CODIST-Geo to UN-GGIM: Africa, which will be an important platform for dialogue and consultation among African stakeholders, and with international partners and organizations.

16. Specifically, the session will review and improve draft technical documents prepared by ECA and provide perspectives on the essential activities to be carried out. National experts may present brief perspectives on the subject based on current developments in their sectors and/or countries. The presentations will be discussed and reviewed for relevance, coherence and complementarities in relation to the African situation and international status. These will be taken into consideration in finalizing outcomes, which shall be disseminated to all Member States, as the African contribution to UN-GGIM.

17. The outcome from the inaugural session of UN-GGIM: Africa will contribute to achieving the global vision of UN-GGIM, and will encourage regional progress, helping every region deliver its remit. The outcome will also lay the path to better geospatial data management, a basis and major component of spatial data infrastructure development activity. It will strengthen the capacity of African countries to leverage the enabling capabilities of geospatial information technology for various socioeconomic sectors, environment monitoring and disaster management, among others.

A. Meeting theme

18. The theme of the inaugural UN-GGIM: Africa session will be “Improving Africa for Africans by the power of geospatial information”.

B. Issues and topics

19. The session will review the critical aspects of setting pan-African geospatial information governance, covering:

(a) Key challenges, opportunities and constraints of geospatial information management in Africa;

(b) The African geo-information vision: needs and prospects;

(c) The governance structure and modus operandi of UN-GGIM: Africa; and

(d) The African Action Plan on Geospatial Information Management, with a framework of priority actions, milestones and related costs.

C. Venue and date

20. The session will take place from 10 to 12 December 2014 in Tunis, Tunisia. It will be held in parallel with the StatCom Africa session, offering the opportunity to foster synergy with the statistics sector.

D. Conduct

21. The first meeting of the inaugural session of UN-GGIM: Africa will be held in plenary. Opening and closing meetings, as well as one plenary meeting, will be held in conjunction with StatCom Africa.

E. Participants

22. The following participants will be invited to the preparatory meeting:

(a) National officials in the fields of mapping, cartography and surveying; and

(b) High-level geospatial science and technology experts selected from non-government organizations, academia, research institutions, the private sector and other partners.

F. Working languages

23. English and French will be the two working languages of the session.

G. Administrative arrangements and logistics

24. Contacted participants are requested to confirm their participation to ECA as soon as possible, but not later than 15 October 2014. ECA will organize the local logistics arrangements, including hotel reservations, airport reception and transportation to and from hotels. Participants will be responsible for organizing their entry visas and vaccinations prior to their travel.

H. Contact information

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