

United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management
Virtual Meeting of the Expanded Bureau of UN-GGIM
Thursday, 11 March 2021
11:00 hrs. – 13:00 hrs. (UTC)/6:00am – 8:00am (UTC-5/EST)

Summary Report

1. Welcome and introductions (Secretariat)

The first meeting of the UN-GGIM Expanded Bureau since the tenth session of UN-GGIM was moderated by Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). After welcoming all participants he proceeded to outline the agenda for the meeting, which was confirmed as follows:

- 1) Welcome and introductions (Secretariat)
 - a) Welcome new Expanded Bureau members
- 2) Updates on the tenth and eleventh sessions of UN-GGIM (Secretariat)
 - a) Report of the tenth session – now adopted by ECOSOC
 - b) Planning and Provisional Agenda for the eleventh session
 - c) Activities, events and interactions
- 3) Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) (Secretariat)
 - a) Establishment and first meeting of the High-level Group of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF)
- 4) Status of United Nations Centres in Deqing, China and Bonn, Germany (Secretariat)
 - a) Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre in Deqing, China
 - b) Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence in Bonn, Germany
- 5) Strengthening of geospatial information management (Secretariat)
 - a) Preparations to report to ECOSOC on the implementation of resolution 2016/27 ‘Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management’, with a view to report back to the Council in 2021
- 6) UNGEGN (Chair, UNGEGN)
 - a) Update on the 2021 session of UNGEGN, to be convened virtually from 3-7 May 2021
- 7) Collaborations and coordination (Provided by members prior to meeting)
 - a) Key initiatives of Regional Committees and Thematic Networks
 - b) Engagement activities with Regional Commissions
- 8) Any other business (Secretariat)
 - a) Second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)
 - b) Virtual staff secondments to the Secretariat – the Netherlands and Sweden
 - c) Next meetings – possibly in May in preparation for the eleventh session of UN-GGIM if scaled down and virtual; and margins of eleventh session of UN-GGIM

It was remarked that, as the activities and milestones of UN-GGIM tend to transfer from one session to another, the focus will now be on its eleventh session scheduled for August 2021. It was further clarified that, given the time constraints of a virtual meeting, all the Regional Committees and Thematic Groups of UN-GGIM, as well as UNGEGN and ECLAC, submitted 1 – 2 page Information Briefs for Agenda item 7 in advance of the meeting (and which are posted on the Expanded Bureau’s website). This proved to be a valuable means to share information, and it was agreed that this could be a modality for future Expanded Bureau meetings.

a) Welcome new Expanded Bureau members

The Expanded Bureau was introduced to, and welcomed:

- 1) Ms. Ingrid Vanden Berghe, the newly elected co-Chair of UN-GGIM (*Belgium*);
- 2) Mr. Rudolf Staiger, the Chair of UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies (*International Federation of Surveyors*);
- 3) Ms. Maria Antonia Brovelli, the Chair of the UN-GGIM Academic Network (*Politecnico di Milano, Italy*); and
- 4) Mr. Sanjay Kumar, the Chair of the UN-GGIM Private Sector Network (*Geospatial Media and Communications, India*).

2. Updates on the tenth and eleventh sessions of UN-GGIM (Secretariat)

a) Report of the tenth session – now adopted by ECOSOC

The Secretariat informed the Expanded Bureau that the report of the tenth session of UN-GGIM was considered by ECOSOC at its 24 February meeting instead of the usual June setting. The hope is that this will be the modality in the years ahead, as this critical process provides a mandate, with a decision number, for the planning and preparation of the next session of UN-GGIM, inclusive of the issuing of Notes Verbale. For formality, at its 5th plenary meeting on 24 February 2021, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in its **Decision 2021/217**:

- (a) Took note of the report of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management on its tenth session (E/2021/46);
- (b) Decided that the eleventh session of the Committee of Experts shall be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 4 to 6 August 2021; and
- (c) Approved the provisional agenda and documentation for the eleventh session of the Committee of Experts as set out in the report of the tenth session.

b) Planning and Provisional Agenda for the eleventh session

At its tenth session in August and September 2010, the Committee of Experts decided that its eleventh session shall be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 4 to 6 August 2021 – in the hopeful anticipation that the COVID-19 pandemic would be behind us. However, given the global ‘unknown’ situation with the pandemic, vaccine rollouts, and international travel, there are concerns that an in-person meeting at the UN Headquarters in August may, sadly, prove to be unrealistic. Therefore, alternate dates for the eleventh session are being considered by the Secretariat; these being 23 – 24 and 27 August 2021. These dates will provide some flexibility should the session need to be convened virtually, or as a hybrid session, while at the same time, still allowing for a full in-person meeting if circumstances permit. The planning and alternate dates were welcomed by the Expanded Bureau and noted as a pragmatic option given a final decision cannot be taken at the present moment.

It was noted that, while not an item on the agenda “celebrating the ten-year anniversary of UN-GGIM” would be fitting if the eleventh session could be in-person. In considering the logistics of a possible virtual session scenario, the Expanded Bureau was prompted to consider whether there is a need to discuss and deliberate every item on the agenda annually, perhaps a few items may be considered biennially. However,



an immediate focus must be on items that are strategic, such as the UN-GGIM report to ECOSOC on its implementation of resolution E/RES/2016/27.

c) Activities, events and interactions

The Expanded Bureau was briefed on the following:

Subcommittee on Geodesy

Preparing for a Global Forum on Geodesy on Earth Day, 22 April 2021, to highlight the important role geodesy plays in our everyday lives, including examples of how geodesy is used to provide safer, more resilient communities, enables routing and travels, and provides evidence of changes on our planet. The Forum will provide Member States and key stakeholders with an opportunity to better understand how reliant we are on geodesy, and be a catalyst for discussions on the need for improved geodetic infrastructure, increased access to geodetic products and services, and better education and training.

Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information

As part of their efforts towards the implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF), the Expert Group is making progress, guided by Decision 10/106 and its Work Plan. The co-Chairs will convene its Steering Group in a meeting with regional focal points and consider how to promote the “Global survey to diagnose readiness at the country level for implementing the GSGF”.

Expert Group on Land Administration and Management

Focus is on implementing the adopted Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) leveraging the guidance and resources available in the IGIF Implementation Guide. The Expert Group wishes to engage regional committees to advocate and raise awareness of the merits and benefits of effective land administration, and that the FELA, as the overarching policy guidance, can be referenced and implemented by Member States.

Working Group on Geospatial Information of the IAEG-SDGs

Principal focus is the development of the Working Group’s SDGs Geospatial Roadmap that is aimed to be practical and actionable, to support Member States and stakeholders to realize the as yet untapped potential that geospatial information can bring to the SDGs and its global indicator framework. The Roadmap will also communicate the importance of geospatial information in measuring and monitoring progress in achieving the SDGs.

Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters

The Bureau and task team are preparing their 2020-2022 Work Plan to be presented at the eleventh session for consideration and approval. The responses from the Assessment Survey on the implementation of the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disaster are being analysed and a report prepared.

Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management

Working on policy and legal challenges related to authoritative data, authority and custodianship and issues related to geospatial data for public good and ethical use. The Working Group continues to support the operationalization of the IGIF at the country-level by working on and developing resources to promote the availability and accessibility of geospatial information.



Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information

Working on documenting good practices on working across land and sea interface (coastal zone) and elaborating the IGIF to provide guidance to address issues and ensure that the watered/marine aspect is addressed when operationalizing the IGIF at the country-level.

International Standards Development Organizations

The three SDOs – ISO-TC/211, IHO and OGC – are looking into producing a new Standard Guide for the global geospatial community, and as an online presence. This would allow for real-time maintenance of the document, while allowing for it to also be printed if necessary. The aim is to eliminate the companion document by leveraging links to provide greater details, and as an online resource.

The Expanded Bureau was also informed that the World Bank's Open Learning Campus had developed two e-Learning courses on strengthening geospatial information management using the IGIF. These courses represent work to e-package learning and raising of awareness, that are valuable and needed.

It was acknowledged that enormous credit must be given to Member States and the Thematic Groups whose expert representatives work tirelessly in the background on detailed technical efforts and outcomes that at times may not be very apparent.

3. Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) (Secretariat)

a) Establishment and first meeting of the High-level Group of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF)

The Expanded Bureau was informed that the HLG-IGIF had been established and convened its inaugural meeting on Thursday, 25 February 2021. The HLG-IGIF membership comprises the members of the UN-GGIM Bureau together with Member States nominated by the respective regional committees of UN-GGIM according to the following composition: Africa (4 members); America's (4 members); Arab States (2 members); Asia and the Pacific (4 members); and Europe (4 members).

The inaugural membership of the HLG-IGIF is as follows:

UN-GGIM Bureau

Belgium, Cameroon, Tonga

UN-GGIM: Africa

Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Morocco, South Africa

UN-GGIM: Americas

Chile, Jamaica, Panama, United States of America

UN-GGIM: Arab States

Algeria, Jordan

UN-GGIM-AP

Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal

UN-GGIM: Europe

Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom



At its inaugural meeting the HLG-IGIF, by acclamation, confirmed Mr. Tulu Besha Bedada from the Geospatial Information Institute of Ethiopia, and Mr. Anders Sandin from Lantmateriet, Sweden as co-Chairs. The Group also unanimously adopted its Terms of Reference and proceeded to deliberate key issues to be addressed. The HLG-IGIF agreed to prepare an initial work programme that will address current efforts to refine and finalize the Implementation Guide, effective communication and strengthen coordination. The Group also considered establishing task or sub-groups with invited experts, when necessary, to work on some aspects of its work programme, while the HLG-IGIF concentrates on the strategic oversight and coordination. The HLG-IGIF agreed to meet again, virtually, in May to consider its initial work programme.

The Expanded Bureau acknowledged the importance and diversity of the membership of the HLG-IGIF, both geographically and development context, and that the IGIF is country-led and driven. The HLG-IGIF web-site is: <http://ggim.un.org/UNGGIM-HLG-IGIF/>.

4. Status of United Nations Centres in Deqing, China and Bonn, Germany (Secretariat)

a) Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre in Deqing, China (GGKIC)

The Expanded Bureau was informed of the ongoing efforts involving a number of entities within the United Nations and China towards the establishment of the GGKIC in Deqing, China. The Host Country Agreement (HCA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United Nations and China are presently being negotiated and finalized. Both parties are motivated to progress and conclude the negotiations in a timely manner.

b) Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence in Bonn, Germany (GGCE)

A set of documents, including a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), are being developed in partnership with Germany towards the establishment of the GGCE on the UN Campus in Bonn, Germany. These will leverage the already existing United Nations HQ Agreement for its Bonn Campus. The documents are being reviewed internally (within DESA) and thereafter, will be escalated to the UN Office of Legal Affairs where the documents will be worked through and negotiated with Germany.

5. Strengthening of geospatial information management (Secretariat)

a) Preparations to report to ECOSOC on the implementation of resolution 2016/27 'Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management', with a view to report back to the Council in 2021

The Expanded Bureau was provided with some history of the mandate of UN-GGIM, which was originally for five years. In 2016 the mandate of UN-GGIM was strengthened by ECOSOC resolution 2016/27 'Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management', and anchored firmly as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC. As no additional resources were provided, and noting the increasing role and relevance of the Committee of Experts, ECOSOC requested that UN-GGIM report back to the Council, no later than in five years' time, on the implementation of the resolution, and to examine the strengthening of the institutional arrangements of the Committee.



The mandate given to UN-GGIM by ECOSOC in 2016 is very strong but has been provided with no additional resources to implement these strengthened mandates. With a growing program of work, this has resulted in some commensurately growing vulnerability within the Secretariat due to the limited staff resources. The Secretariat expressed appreciation to some Member States who are supporting and addressing this vulnerability. The support was somewhat initiated by Germany because of the efforts to establish the UN Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence at the UN Campus in Bonn, Germany. Now, and recognizing the growing workload within the Secretariat, virtual secondments are being provided on a part-time basis from Netherlands and Sweden. There is now a small coalition of the willing, a group of allies that understand the vulnerability and the need to strengthen the institutional arrangements for global geospatial information management. This group are also contributing, and their tangible support and contributions are well appreciated and noted.

In addressing the request from ECOSOC to “examine the strengthening of the institutional arrangements of the Committee”, a more strategic view and vision of where UN-GGIM stands now and where it can be, and focusing on the value proposition and necessary resources, is now needed. There is no question that UN-GGIM is effective and delivering, through its regional and international stakeholders architecture and partnerships, as well as through a number of in-country initiatives. However, a brilliant report that is technical and demonstrates ‘what UN-GGIM has achieved’ may not be the answer, as this was the approach taken in 2016. ECOSOC knows well what UN-GGIM has achieved – and that these achievements have been delivered with limited resources. Such a report must be more strategic and be driven by champions from Member States (as the real beneficiaries) that can influence the political process. Therefore, the UN-GGIM geospatial professionals will need to engage their diplomats. In this regard, the Expanded Bureau should provide this leadership.

The Secretariat was asked whether the Private Sector Network could provide some support such as virtual secondments. It was also noted that communication is very important, and the Expanded Bureau should consider developing a document that is driven by demonstrating the socio-economic value of geospatial information.

The timing for the preparation and submission of the report to ECOSOC was discussed and acknowledged that it should be carefully considered, given that it is a significant undertaking. Another dimension is that ECOSOC will likely be pre-occupied with the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis in its current session. Therefore, it was suggested that an initial report and considerations be prepared for the eleventh session of the Committee of Experts for discussion and inputs (in a similar manner to the 2016 report – provided to the fifth session of UN-GGIM in August 2015) and thereafter, work on submitting a final report to ECOSOC in early 2022. There will be a need to consider the desired ‘institutional arrangements’ that will take UN-GGIM forward – what is that arrangement, what kind of budgetary resources, what is the rationale, how to develop and rally support, etc. – will need to be captured. This item will also need to be high on UN-GGIM’s agenda for its eleventh session.

The Chairs of each of the Regional Committees of UN-GGIM observed that they have a role to play in this important process, and stand ready to reach out to Member States in their regions and rally the needed political support. It was agreed that a 1-2 page communication/information briefing note be developed and provided to the Chairs of the Regional Committees to communicate and rally the needed support from their respective regions.



6. UNGEGN (Chair, UNGEGN)

a) Update on the 2021 session of UNGEGN, to be convened virtually from 3-7 May 2021

The Expanded Bureau welcomed the participation of the Chair of UNGEGN, Mr. Pierre Jaillard, who provided his update¹ that included preparation for the 2021 session of the Group from 3–7 May 2021. With the theme “Geographical Names supporting sustainable development and management of the pandemic”, the 2021 UNGEGN session will consider its Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029, its term and strategies tuned to fit, as far as possible, with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Strategic Plan is drafted with five strategies, among which the second, “Relationships, links and connections”, underlines UNGEGN’s wishes to strengthen the links between the two bodies (UN-GGIM and UNGEGN) and to deepen collaboration on concrete projects. In that sense, the Chair renewed his invitation to the Expanded Bureau, to participate in the next session of the Group of Experts in May to help define tangible projects to be conceived and achieved, matching with expectations of both bodies.

During the ensuing discussions, the role of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) was raised for consideration by UNGEGN in its work. It was recognized that the IGIF is a multi-dimensional Framework that is aimed at strengthening national geospatial information management in countries. It comprises an overarching Strategy – from local to global, Implementation guidance, and Action plans at the country level. Therefore, the IGIF is not about data and databases, but what can be leveraged – the governance, the policy, the finance, the partnerships for example, to strengthen a country’s geospatial resources. In terms of ensuring coordination and partnerships, national geospatial information agencies are encouraged to reach out to and coordinate with national geographical names authorities. The Expanded Bureau appreciated and thanked the Chair of UNGEGN for his valuable participation and update.

7. Collaborations and coordination (Provided by members prior to meeting)

a) Key initiatives of Regional Committees and Thematic Networks

In the interest of time and given the depth and details of the many initiatives and activities, the Expanded Bureau acknowledged the Information Briefs provided by all five Regional Committees and four Thematic Networks. All of the reports were provided to the Expanded Bureau and are posted online, at the web-page created for this meeting.

UN-GGIM: Europe highlighted their decision to delay their annual Plenary Meeting to October 2021, being more optimistic for an in-person meeting. It was noted that UN-GGIM: Africa, UN-GGIM: Americas and UN-GGIM-AP planned to have their annual Plenary Meetings in October-November 2021. UN-GGIM: Arab States will be having their meeting in February 2022.

b) Engagement activities with Regional Commissions

The Expanded Bureau also acknowledged the Information Brief provided by UNECLAC. UN-GGIM: Europe remarked that they continue to collaborate with UNECE and the European Statistical System.

8. Any other business (Secretariat)

¹ UNGEGN also provided a two-page information brief to the Expanded Bureau



a) Second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)

The Expanded Bureau was informed of its parallel efforts to evaluate and assess the detailed proposals submitted for hosting the second UNWGIC. Two meetings had taken place and a third is scheduled where the bidders have been invited to present and clarify their detailed proposals. A decision can be expected thereafter. It was remarked that this is a difficult season for planning major global events as there is still no certainty that large-scale in-person events can be realized, even in 2022.

b) Virtual staff secondments to the Secretariat – the Netherlands and Sweden

The Expanded Bureau was informed that the Secretariat is very fortunate to have two virtual part-time staff secondments from the Netherlands Kadaster and Lantmateriet Sweden to support specific items of the UN-GGIM programme of work. It was acknowledged that the virtual secondments are progressing well and provide a simple and valuable model that could be used by other countries to support the growing work and demands of the Secretariat.

c) Next meetings

The Expanded Bureau noted the possibility of a virtual meeting in May as part of the preparation for the eleventh session of UN-GGIM, particularly if held in a scaled down and virtual format. Another meeting can be expected to be convened on the margins of the eleventh session of UN-GGIM.



Annex 1: List of participants

UN-GGIM Bureau

1. Ingrid Vanden Berghe, Belgium
2. Fernand Guy Isseri, Cameroon
3. Rosamond Bing, Tonga

UN-GGIM: Africa

4. Oumar Ka, Senegal

UN-GGIM: Americas

5. Paloma Merodio Gomez, Mexico
6. Gabriela Seco Garcia, UN-GGIM: Americas Secretariat

UN-GGIM: Arab States

7. Bandar Al-Muslmani, Saudi Arabia

UN-GGIM-AP

8. Alison Rose, Australia

UN-GGIM: Europe

9. Tomaž Petek, Slovenia
10. Carol Agius, UN-GGIM: Europe Secretariat

UN-GGIM: Geospatial Societies

11. Rudolf Staiger, International Federation of Surveyors

UN-GGIM: Academic Network

12. Maria Antonia Brovelli, Politecnico di Milano

UN-GGIM: Private Sector Network

13. Sanjay Kumar, Geospatial Media and Communications

UN Geospatial Network

14. Alexander Caldas, UN Environment

UNGEGN

15. Pierre Jaillard, France

UNECA/UN-GGIM Africa: Secretariat

16. Andre Nonguierma

UNESCAP/UN-GGIM-AP Secretariat

17. Keran Wang
18. Verena Kausche
19. Tomohiro Arakawa



UNECE

20. Steven Vale

UNECLAC

21. Rolando Ocampo

22. Alvaro Mauricio Monett Hernandez

UN-GGIM Secretariat

23. Stefan Schweinfest

24. Greg Scott

25. Chee Hai Teo

26. Ayako Kagawa

27. Cecille Blake

28. Guillaume Le Sourd

29. Mark Iliffe

30. Vilma Frani

