

REPORT ON THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE UN-GGIM

Importance of UN-GGIM Initiative Continues to Grow

The Fourth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) was held from 6-8 August 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, USA. UN-GGIM is continuing to move forward towards enhancing collaboration between Member States and assisting in making accurate, reliable and authoritative geospatial information readily available in support of national, regional and global development.

Ministers and senior leaders from United Nations Member States and international organisations and societies including ISPRS, ICA, FIG, IAG, Worldbank and FAO and many more spent three days discussing mapping and location issues affecting the world. In his opening speech of the session, Mr Wu Hongbo, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said: "It has only been three years since the Committee of Experts started its worthy journey that has already resulted in a number of early achievements. The level of Member State participation has increased, as evidenced by the attendance figures over the past two sessions. The number of work areas has grown where expert and working groups have been created; and your work has really drawn much wider attention and support from the international community."

Ambassadorial Role

During the Fourth Session, UN-GGIM moved forward towards fulfilling its important mandate to enhance collaboration between Member States and to assist in making accurate, reliable and authoritative geospatial information readily available to support national, regional and global development and the important sustainable development agenda. What Hongbo pointed out in his opening speech was exactly what became clear in the days that followed. UN-GGIM furthered the extent to which it is embedded in the governmental and policymaking environments of the United Nations Member States. The ambassadorial role of the United Nations for the use of geoinformation is not to be underestimated and will have a positive effect on geomatics as a whole.

Strategic

The Committee of Experts successfully dealt with strategic issues such as: the enhancement of the global geodetic reference frame; the identification of approaches for legal and policy frameworks, including privacy laws required to support the use of authoritative geospatial data; the development of global mapping for sustainable development; the establishment and implementation of geospatial standards; the linkage of geospatial information to statistics; and the definition of a shared statement of principles for the global geospatial community. The use of authoritative geospatial information is beginning to change the way in which global challenges such as climate change, disease pandemics, food shortages, economic crises and disaster recovery situations are predicted, monitored and managed. One example is where authoritative geospatial data is used by emergency services in rapidly changing environments, such as landslides, floods and earthquakes, enabling them to gain situational awareness of the disaster areas faster and hence to save more lives. Throughout the event, capacity development of countries – through training, advisory services and encouraging good governance of geospatial information management – was keenly supported.

Global Geodetic Reference Framework

During the Fourth Session, the Committee of Experts also debated and endorsed a draft resolution on a Global Geodetic Reference Framework (GGRF) for Sustainable Development for further referral to the General Assembly. There is a growing requirement for more accurate measuring of the changing planet down to millimetre level, since geospatial data impacts on countries' economies as well as their environments and hence leads to economic benefits. Therefore, UN-GGIM recognises the need for global co-operation and contribution to the GGRF under the overarching umbrella of the United Nations. The Committee of Experts is considering how to enhance intergovernmental co-operation, which will lead to geospatial data interoperability.

Regional Initiatives

Several regional UN-GGIM initiatives shared their progress, working plans and agendas during the Session, including the UN-GGIM Americas, the UN-GGIM Middle East and UN-GGIM Asia Pacific, all of which are already well established. Delegates were updated on the plans for setting up regional UN-GGIM groups in Europe and Africa. The regional initiatives are becoming more and more institutionalised

and therefore are increasingly growing in importance in their own region to share, extend and implement the message of the global Committee of Experts.

Appeal

At a reception held by the United Kingdom ambassador to the United Nations, an appeal was made to the delegates to return to their respective countries and act as ambassadors for the right use of geoinformation for the betterment of the environment and, together with that, sustainable positive effects on the world's economies. Vanessa Lawrence, co-chair of UN-GGIM, reiterated that appeal when she closed the session, mentioning again the importance of being an ambassador: "Geodata is so vital in monitoring, and accurate geodata serves as basis of so many other fields, that you should convince your political masters to acknowledge this, leading up to a positive decision on the permanent establishment of UN-GGIM by ECOSOC in 2016." By the time the Session closed, the progress made during the three-day meeting in New York City had made it very clear that delegates were taking that message seriously.

More Information

For information on the Fourth Session, including the agenda and technical reports, please visit: http://ggim.un.org/ggim_committee.html. The Fourth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) was streamed live and is now available on demand on the United Nations Web TV website at: <http://webtv.un.org>.

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/importance-of-un-ggim-initiative-continues-to-grow>
