

UNGGIM-ISPRS Project: “Status of Mapping in the World”™



ISPRS embarked on a co-operative project with the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Secretariat in New York, USA, in 2011. Gottfried Konecny from the Leibniz University Hannover, Germany, reported on its progress at the UNGGIM2 Conference in New York in August 2012, at the UNGGIM Geospatial Forum in Qatar in February 2013 and at the UNGGIM3 Conference in Cambridge, UK, in July 2013.

A form with 27 questions about the status of mapping was jointly drafted and sent out to the UN member states. The questions concerned the coverage and the age of topographic base maps at the various scale ranges from 1: 5,000 to 1: 250,000. The questions also asked for information on the infrastructure of the mapping agencies, such as the availability of geospatial data to the public,

whether free of charge or for purchase, the existence of a national map updating programme and its technical details, the use of satellite imagery for updating, the existence of a cadastral system, and the financial and personnel resources.

Out of the 193 UN member states, 94 replies have so far been received. The responses indicate that restrictions on availability of maps to the public exist mainly in Asia. In Europe, parts of Asia and Australia, maps are sold to the public, whereas in North and most of South America maps are either freely available or issued at cost. While most of the countries in the Americas lack nationwide cadastral systems, these do exist in Europe, Asia and Australia.

Analysis of the responses from the questionnaires can be downloaded in map format from the UNGGIM3 website:

<http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/3rd%20UNCE/ISPRS%20Status%20of%20Mapping%20figures.pdf>

To assess the status of the global map coverage at the scales relevant for sustainable development (1:25,000 to 1:50,000) the databases of Eastview Geospatial were used. They contain not only maps or digital data produced by the countries themselves but also produced by US and former Soviet Union military sources. In reviewing this material, it can be concluded that the land surface of the Earth, excluding some Arctic and Antarctic territories, is mapped at the scale 1:50,000. However, some material may be more than 40 years old. The exceptions are Europe and North America, with an average map age of less than 10 years. This illustrates the huge potential of using recent, global high-resolution satellite imagery coverage for the purpose updating maps at these relevant scales.

ISPRS has created Working Group IV/2 to make the effort sustainable. In August 2013, the UN Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas in New York passed the following resolution to UN-ECOSOC: “To acknowledge the work carried out by the United Nations Group of Experts on Global Information Management and the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing to collect information on authoritative governmental mapping by the Member States, to propose the completion of the work and to recommend those countries that have not yet responded to do so.”