



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

Seventh High-level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information
Management

8 October 2024

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

It is my honor to address you today at the opening of the seventh High-level Forum of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, themed 'Accelerating Implementation: Achieving Resilience.'

On behalf of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, I want to extend my warmest greetings to all of you who are participating in this important global forum.

The subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC are the driving forces behind the technical guidance that is produced by the Council, and I want to recognize the significant work, the achievements, and the contributions of this Committee.

In our rapidly evolving world, the need for accurate, timely, and reliable geospatial information has never been more essential to address the challenges that we are currently facing. Having access to authoritative geospatial information and official statistics is crucial as they underpin the management and monitoring of all seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.



By enhancing geospatial information capabilities, we enable countries to better respond to their unique challenges, improve governance, and we drive innovation in key sectors. Your work and outputs to date tell me that this Committee of Experts is very well-positioned to provide feasible and innovative solutions that reflect the dynamic complexities of our planet.

Excellencies,

During my Presidency, I will have a number of key priorities that speak to the importance of geospatial information.

One is to address the crisis of displacement, which affects people worldwide due to conflict, climate change, and the deep inequalities. I am encouraged by ongoing international efforts to emphasize the critical role that geospatial information plays in addressing these challenges.

I commend the leadership of Barbados, Tonga, and the United Kingdom in the Task Team on Geospatial Information for Climate Resilience for delivering the report on 'Applying Geospatial Information to Climate Challenges' at this high-level forum, and for their contributions to the recently concluded SIDS4 Conference in amplifying the value of geospatial information.

Another priority of my Presidency is Artificial Intelligence, which will be addressed on day three of this forum. I urge Member States to unite to ensure the responsible use of Geospatial Artificial Intelligence to accelerate progress on the SDGs. AI can accelerate analysis of vast, complex data, empowering real-time, evidence-based decisions on issues like sea level monitoring, land use, and resource management.

I encourage countries who are leading in this technology to help facilitate its transfer to those who can benefit the most. For example, through providing



geospatial infrastructure and expertise. Geospatial AI has immense potential to support sustainable development and address global challenges, but only if we act together. We all know the next few years are going to be critical in this effort.

Distinguished Participants,

Looking ahead, the role of integrated geospatial information management will only grow in importance. As machine learning and analytics, artificial intelligence, and geospatial information management continue to evolve, they will enable us to gain deeper insights into the world's most pressing issues. This ecosystem will enhance our ability to manage natural resources, to develop resilient communities, and to tackle climate related challenges.

However, with progress comes some responsibility. We have to ensure that the development and use of geospatial information are guided by sound legal and regulatory frameworks, good data governance, transparency, and inclusivity. Data security and privacy must be safeguarded, and we must work to close the geospatial digital divide, ensuring that all Member States, regardless of size or resources, can benefit from these significant advances in geospatial technologies.

The Economic and Social Council remains committed to supporting the work of this Committee of Experts and its partners, ensuring that geospatial information management remains central to our global agenda.

As we continue our work together, let us embrace the power of geospatial information to drive progress, to create opportunities, and, most importantly, ensure a world where every person has a chance to thrive.

I want to wish you very fruitful discussions. Thank you so much.