

**United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information
Management (UN-GGIM)**

ECOSOC Integration Dialogue 3, 10 June 2021

Introductory Statement by Ms. Ingrid Vanden Berghe, Co-Chair UN-GGIM

1. Geospatial information describes the location of ‘where’ all things are, and provides the digital connection between people, their place, their activities, and their environment. Comprising both data and enabling technologies, geospatial information touches many sectors and thematic areas across the entire development paradigm. Due to its cross-cutting nature, geospatial information is integrative, innovative, and comprehensive.
2. However, there is still a lack of awareness of the power of geospatial information, or the critical value gained from combining and integrating this ‘location-based’ data with many other data types, including for example statistics.
3. Further, we often hear that there is a lack of reliable data to measure SDG progress – that constant data gaps exist. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced that, as with the SDGs themselves, the most vulnerable countries continue to face the greatest challenges in collecting, analysing, maintaining, and using timely and reliable data, including geospatial and other location-based data.
4. But this is changing. Geospatial information can bridge the digital data gap across many communities and sectors. There are new opportunities for Member States to acquire and manage data, and to strengthen their geospatial capabilities – to achieve a more comprehensive and integrated data approach – through the implementation of the frameworks and methods that have been developed by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, or UN-GGIM.
5. The United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, or IGIF, is one such globally adopted Framework. The IGIF, now being implemented in many Member States, creates an enabling environment where national governments can coordinate, develop, strengthen, and promote the efficient and effective use and sharing of geospatial information for policy formulation, decision-making, and innovation.
6. For example, a tangible benefit identified in the IGIF is creating greater resilience to disasters, where data sharing and geospatial information are critical. Being able to share integrated geospatial information in real-time means the ‘same information will be delivered to all agencies at the same time’.
7. The COVID-19 pandemic, as a global disaster, reinforced the applicability of the IGIF as an overarching Framework. In this case, the role and contribution of geospatial data, technologies, and tools to deliver timely and reliable information for public health and safety in a systematic way across countries and regions.
8. A practical example to show ways of geospatial data and tools being applied from the early days of the pandemic, was Member States making use of highly visual national geospatial dashboards to provide situational awareness to record and report the virus’ spread. Often, it was these dashboards that become the communication interface for the public and decision-makers, and to enable informed-decisions, whether it is to stay and shelter in place, or know where the virus hotspots were, and why.
9. Geospatial information provides the ‘glue’ to bring these many elements together and anchored by location. This is most pertinent in developing countries, which for too long have been left behind. We



now have the technology, tools, and methods to bring data in all its forms together to understand '**where**' things are happening, to bridge the geospatial digital divide, and to build back more resilient, healthy, equitable and sustainable societies.

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