

Statistical Commission
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Background document
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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

Items for decision: Integration of statistical and geospatial information

2023 Terms of Reference

Prepared by the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information

1. Mandate and Preamble

- 1.1 The establishment of a “Statistical-Geospatial Expert Group” was requested by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 44th session in March 2013 (through its decision 44/101) and endorsed by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) at its third session in July 2013 (through its decision 3/107). This established the United Nations Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information.
- 1.2 Through making decision 9/106 at its ninth session in August 2019, UN-GGIM adopted the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF). A key milestone for the Expert Group, the GSGF facilitates the integration of statistical and geospatial information. A Framework for the world, the GSGF enables a range of data to be integrated from both statistical and geospatial communities and, through the application of its five Principles and supporting key elements, permits the production of harmonised and standardised geospatially enabled statistical data. The resulting data can then be integrated with statistical, geospatial, and other information to inform and facilitate data-driven and evidence-based decision-making to support local, sub-national, national, regional, and global development priorities and agendas, such as the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UN-GGIM decision 9/106 was subsequently endorsed by the UNSC in its decision 51/123, made at its 51st session in March 2020. Furthermore, in making decision 48/108 at its 48th session in March 2017, the UNSC strengthened the mandate of the Expert Group for it to become the overall coordination group for all activities in the area of the integration of statistical and geospatial information.
- 1.3 The Expert Group notes the mandates provided to the UNSC and UN-GGIM, as subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In this regard, ECOSOC in its resolution 2022/3, recognizes the importance for national statistical and data systems to build partnerships with other actors of the statistical and data system and other relevant actors outside of the official national data system and to integrate statistical and geospatial information to capture granular data to effectively leave no one behind. Furthermore, in its resolution 2022/24, ECOSOC reiterates the importance of strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of UN-GGIM, particularly for the achievement of its operations focused on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework.
- 1.4 As such, this revised Terms of Reference, discussed at the seventh meeting of the Expert Group in Santiago, Chile, in December 2022, revises the Expert Group’s objectives, functions, and modalities to better align with the needs of both the Statistical and Geospatial communities, *inter alia* the 2030 Agenda.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Expert Group are to:

- 2.1 Provide high-level coordination and a forum for dialogue, among representatives of both the statistical and geospatial communities, on global efforts relating to the integration of statistical and geospatial information.

**Terms of Reference for the Expert Group
on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information**

- 2.2 Play a leadership role by raising awareness and highlighting the importance of reliable, timely, fit-for-purpose, and integrated statistical and geospatial information to support social, economic, environmental, and resilience policy decision-making, including at the sub-national and regional levels.
- 2.3 Prioritise and propose work plans and guidelines that advance national and global efforts relating to the integration of statistical and geospatial information, particularly those associated with the GSGF, so that there is increased information to support social, economic, environmental, and resilience policy decision making, including at the sub-national and regional levels.
- 2.4 Promote and support activities that facilitate the implementation of the GSGF, particularly to support informed decision-making in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), climate change, natural disasters, population and housing censuses, security issues, food production and other thematic areas of the 2030 Agenda at both the national and local levels.
- 2.5 Support the UNSC and UN-GGIM in developing norms, principles, guides, and standards to significantly increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable integrated statistical and geospatial information, including any regional capacity development initiatives. Furthermore, where relevant, support the UNSC and UN-GGIM in implementing their mandates provided by ECOSOC through enhancing the coordination and coherence activities in the area of statistical and geospatial integration.

3. Functions

The functions of the Expert Group will be to:

- 3.1 Provide a forum for dialogue and coordination between Member States, United Nations System, and other international organisations and experts with a view to:
 - i) Undertake activities that foster collaboration between statistical and geospatial communities at national and international levels, including to identify and address common issues associated with the integration of statistical and geospatial information, particularly the implementation of the GSGF;
 - ii) Support the development, promotion, and sharing of guidance material and good practice documentation in relation to the GSGF and support the strengthening of the GSGF through its development, *inter-alia*, in the areas of geocoding, common geographies, and interoperability;
 - iii) Identify existing capability development programmes in National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and National Geospatial Information Agencies (NGIAs), National Mapping Agencies (NMAs), and other geospatial organisations that could be leveraged; including the ability to promote and standardise geocoding processes, methodologies and frameworks (for example: dynamic linking techniques);

**Terms of Reference for the Expert Group
on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information**

- iv) Promote, foster, and encourage close collaboration between NSOs, NGIAs, NMAs, and other relevant agencies so that the integration of statistical and geospatial information can be achieved, while ensuring its privacy and confidentiality in-line with prevailing guidelines and practices;
 - v) Encourage the use of existing, and support, the development of new forms of data, data and metadata standards as well as other standards to enhance the interface of location-based datasets from multiple sources to ensure interoperable and usable data;
 - vi) Encourage the development and modernisation of statistical and geospatial capacity within NSOs, NGIAs, and NMAs through capacity building and the promotion of good practices;
 - vii) Develop communication mechanisms to increase the visibility of geospatial activities, beyond specialist geospatial units that exist in some national statistics offices and other agencies, to help keep the statistical and geospatial communities aware of the developments coming from the Expert Group's programme of work; and,
 - viii) Encourage the work of the geospatial community towards the expanding of national data infrastructure, *inter-alia* through the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, and working on identifying and strengthening the interlinkage between the work of the Expert Group and the work programmes of the UNSC, UN-GGIM, and the relevant regional bodies to enhance the integration of statistical and geospatial information.
- 3.2 Bring to the attention of UNSC, UN-GGIM, and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) new developments relating to the integration of geospatial and statistical information, the work on implementing the GSGF, as well as other developments and advancements coming from the Expert Group's programme of work.
- 3.3 Propose work plans to address the main area of focus identified by Member States while ensuring that there are no overlaps or duplication of initiatives with other groups.

4. Membership, Composition and Term of Office

- 4.1 The Expert Group will comprise Members, who are expert representatives from Member State geospatial and statistical national organisations who are knowledgeable and experienced in the topics covered in the objectives and functions of the Expert Group. To ensure broad expertise and effectiveness, relevant subject matter experts from the United Nations System, international organisations and the wider statistical and geospatial communities may be drawn into the Expert Group. All members must be nominated by a Member State and Membership agreed to by the Chairs.
- 4.2 The Expert Group will select two members as co-Chairs and any other position as deemed necessary to support the work of the Expert Group. The Expert Group will appoint two co-Chairs, to represent the views of the statistical and geospatial community. Each will serve for a three (3) year period, renewable once for an additional three (3) years.

**Terms of Reference for the Expert Group
on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information**

- 4.3 If considered appropriate, the Expert Group will establish a Steering Group among its members to assist the two co-Chairs in progressing activities outside of Expert Group meetings.
- 4.4 Should the need arise; the Expert Group may establish Task Teams to work on particular aspects of its work plan. All Task Teams must have defined program of work, deliverables, delivery milestones and be established with a fixed duration. All Task Teams must report progress and delivery of work program to the Steering Group, co-Chairs or Expert Group as appropriate.
- 4.5 The Expert Group will liaise, as required, with representatives of Members States, the United Nations System, international organisations and the wider statistical and geospatial communities. With the guidance of the co-Chairs, the Expert Group may invite nominated experts from these groups to advise its work or be observers at its meetings.

5. Reporting Procedure

- 5.1 The Expert Group will report to both the UNSC and UN-GGIM at their respective annual sessions. This will include the preparation of written reports and related background documents as appropriate.

6. Frequency of Meetings

- 6.1 The Expert Group will operate virtually, and meet annually in person when the opportunity arises, preferably in concurrence with related statistical and geospatial events.

7. Governance

- 7.1 The UNSC and UN-GGIM may review and evaluate the work of the Expert Group from time to time and may propose revisions of the Terms of Reference based on the work the Expert Group has completed and propose any new items for the Expert Group to consider.

8. Secretariat

- 8.1 UNSD will serve as the permanent Secretariat of the Expert Group. It will provide the day-to-day management and coordination when necessary; undertake internal and external communication on behalf of the Expert Group; and, support the Expert Group with substantive guidance when appropriate and requested.
- 8.2 In co-operation with the co-Chairs, the Secretariat will coordinate and assist with the organisation and preparation of the agenda for the meetings of the Expert Group, issue notices, and support with any other activities deemed necessary.
- 8.3 The co-Chairs will coordinate, monitor, and report on the activities of any Task Teams to the UNSC and UN-GGIM, supported by the Secretariat.

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