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Reflecting on the Third Session of UN-GGIM

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) provides a forum for co-ordination and dialogue between Member States and relevant international organisations – of which FIG is one – on issues related to geospatial information management. It aims to promote and develop common policies, methods and codes of practice globally and to enhance the interoperability of geospatial data and services. The terms of reference call upon Member States to designate experts with specific knowledge drawn from the interrelated fields of surveying, geography, cartography and mapping, remote sensing, land/sea and geographic information systems and environmental protection.

The UN-GGIM Secretariat and Ordnance Survey of the UK collaborated and hosted the third session in Cambridge, UK, in July 2013. The event was held in conjunction with the Cambridge Conference, the international meeting of chief executives from national mapping organisations around the world.

The final report on 'Future trends in geospatial information management: the five to ten year vision' was endorsed. The Committee agreed that the document is a 'living document' and will need to be regularly revisited, reviewed and revised. A report on the global geodetic reference frame called for the further improvement of national infrastructures and contributions to strengthen regional and global geodetic reference frames. The Committee agreed on the submission of a resolution to be prepared for the 2013-14 Session



Participants at United Nations Committee of Experts on GGIM.

of the UN General Assembly to seek support and commitment at the highest level to sustain the global geodetic reference frame.

The Committee also considered the trends in national institutional arrangements in geospatial information management, developing a global map for sustainable development, legal and policy frameworks including critical issues related to authoritative data, and establishing and implementing standards for the global geospatial information community. The importance of adopting and implementing geospatial information standards within national legal and policy framework was emphasised.

In the discussion on linking geospatial information to statistics and other data (e.g. social, economic and environmental data) FIG is heartened as the topic of spatially enabling societies has been a key issue for many years. Spatially enabled societies recognise that activities and events have a geographical and temporal context, and make decisions and organise their affairs through the effective and efficient use of spatial data, information and services.

The committee considered a report that was prepared in collaboration with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and FIG on critical issues relating to the integration of land and marine geospatial information. FIG had earlier provided a background paper that was prepared with FIG Commissions 4 and 5. During the ensuing deliberations, FIG urged the Committee members and their respective governments to avail resources to address key technical challenges within their jurisdiction. The Committee was also asked to consider forming a working party of experts from within to identify, share and promote good policies, standards, infrastructures and practices that already exist in some jurisdictions.

FIG is supportive of a consultative process and urged the Committee to work towards an internationally agreed Statement of Shared Principles on Geospatial Information Management.

CheeHai Teo
FIG president

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