

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For discussion and  
recommendations

Meeting of the 2017/2018 Bureau  
Yerevan (Armenia), 10-11 October 2017

Item III (g) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**PROPOSAL FOR GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNECE  
AND UN-GGIM: EUROPE**

**Prepared by the Secretariat**

*This paper presents a detailed proposal for deepening the collaboration between the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European group of the United Nations initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe). The Bureau discussed the proposals for collaboration between UNECE and UN-GGIM:Europe.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. This proposal responds to a request in the following decision of the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the Economic Commission for Europe (E/ECE/1485), in April 2017:

*The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe,  
Decides to request UNECE to engage with the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe), within existing resources, to gain a better understanding of how geospatial information can complement and support existing UNECE activities, particularly in the area of reviewing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, and to present a detailed proposal for collaboration between the two bodies, taking into account the decision of the Conference of European Statisticians of April 2016 to support professional forums for statistical and geospatial experts to share good practices and learn from one another (ECE/CES/91) and a forthcoming decision on the nature and scope of this collaboration by the UNGGIM: Europe Plenary Session, to be held in June 2017, for the consideration of the UNECE Executive Committee before December 2017.*

2. In 2011, ECOSOC established the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), to provide a forum for coordination and dialogue between Member States on topics related to geospatial information. Under this Committee, five regional geospatial expert groups have also been established, including UN-GGIM: Europe, which was created in autumn 2014.

3. In July 2016, ECOSOC adopted a resolution on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management (E/2016/L.28). The Resolution “requests that the regional commissions provide relevant support, upon request and as appropriate, to the work of the regional bodies of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, and that the outcomes and benefits of the activities of those bodies be equally disseminated to all Member States in each region”.

4. Support and collaboration arrangements have already been established between the relevant regional commissions and regional UN-GGIM bodies in Africa and Latin America. UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE have been gradually deepening collaboration, mainly through participation in each-others events, and the organisation of a joint Workshop on the Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Standards (6-8 October 2017, Stockholm, Sweden).

5. In June 2017, the UNECE Conference of European Statisticians “supported greater collaboration between UNECE and UN-GGIM: Europe, and the development of a concrete proposal for joint work, for a decision by the UNECE Executive Committee” (ECE/CES/93, paragraph 36).

6. In August 2017, at its seventh session in New York, the Un-GGIM Committee took two decisions encouraging the GGIM regional bodies to work closer with the UN Regional Commissions<sup>1</sup>:

- Decision 7/101(e) the UN-GGIM Committee “encouraged the regional committees of UN-GGIM to continue their outreach to the UN Regional Commissions, and determine possible mechanisms for collaboration, and report progress back to the Committee at its next session”;
- Decision 7/107 (c) also “urged the regional committees to continue to reach out and engage with their respective regional statistical counterparts to further strengthen partnerships”.

## II. STRATEGIC AREAS FOR COLLABORATION

7. UN-GGIM: Europe and the UNECE Secretariat are exploring the following strategic areas as priorities for future collaboration, which are in line with the latest directions of work from the UN-GGIM Committee at global level:

- **Geospatial information for Sustainable Development:** In March 2017, the United Nations Statistical Commission agreed a framework of 232 indicators for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Most of these indicators are broken down by multiple dimensions, including geospatial ones such as regional or urban/rural classifications. To provide the necessary data, combinations of statistical and geospatial information are required. Combining geospatial and statistical expertise is crucial for measuring and monitoring the SDGs, and tracking annual progress. In the UNECE region, UN-GGIM: Europe and the Conference of European Statisticians are ideally placed to ensure that the statistical and geospatial communities work together to meet this requirement.
- **Institutional arrangements:** In August 2017, the UN-GGIM Committee welcomed work to develop an overarching framework for national institutional arrangements in geospatial information management, including identifying good practices and promoting their application across member States. It also requested the development of “mechanisms for Member States to build capacity to address the legal and policy matters that have an impact on the collection, dissemination and application of

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<sup>1</sup> E/2017/46-E/C.20/2017/18, available at: [http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/GGIM7/GGIM-7%20Report%20\(Advanced%20&%20Unedited%20Version\).pdf](http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/GGIM7/GGIM-7%20Report%20(Advanced%20&%20Unedited%20Version).pdf)

geospatial information”. The UNECE secretariat in close collaboration with UN-GGIM: Europe can provide a platform to facilitate these activities within the UNECE region.

- **Integration of geospatial, statistical and other information, including capacity building:** In early June 2017, the UN-GGIM: Europe plenary session agreed to open its activities for the participation of all UNECE member States. The Conference of European Statisticians welcomed this move, later the same month, noting that “capacity building activities will be needed to support this wider participation”. In August, the UN-GGIM Committee “urged the regional committees to continue to reach out and engage with their respective regional statistical counterparts to further strengthen partnerships” and highlighted the importance of capacity building in the form of advocacy, regional and sub-regional workshops.
- **Involvement of other UNECE work programmes:** Other UNECE work programmes, for example housing and land management, environment, transport and forestry, also have geospatial components in some of their activities. Further work would be undertaken to explore potential synergies.

### III. CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES IN 2018-2020

8. The UNECE Secretariat and the Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe have agreed to pursue the following collaboration activities in the period 2018-2020:

- Geospatial information for sustainable development:
  - Involve representatives of UN-GGIM: Europe in the work of the CES Steering Group on statistics for SDGs.
  - Identify activities where the CES activities could contribute to the UN-GGIM: Europe work plan related to SDGs.
- Institutional arrangements:
  - Promote dialogue between national bodies responsible for geospatial and statistical information. A joint high-level seminar is envisaged, to bring together heads of national statistical, mapping and geospatial agencies to explore areas for building collaboration at the strategic level, and to share good practices.
- Integration of geospatial, statistical and other information:
  - There are currently activities on the integration of data from multiple sources under both UN-GGIM: Europe and the Conference of European Statisticians. Activities should be more closely coordinated and aligned. A joint capacity building event on data integration in the context of SDGs, is foreseen for 2018
  - Supporting the 2020 round of population and housing censuses: Population and housing censuses are traditionally seen as statistical exercises, but they use and produce a lot of geospatial information. Determining the precise location of residences and work places is essential for local and national infrastructure and service delivery planning. Invite UN-GGIM: Europe experts to the regular UNECE meetings on population censuses.
- Capacity building:
  - Following the joint UNECE / UN-GGIM: Europe Workshop on the Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Standards (October 2017, in Stockholm, Sweden) the scope for further joint events in specific technical areas will be considered.

This will take into account national priorities and capacity building requirements of both bodies, particularly in the context of SDGs.

- Involvement of other UNECE work programmes:
  - Establish an internal UNECE network on geospatial information management, with representatives from all interested work programmes. This network would engage with the UN-GGIM: Europe Executive Committee to identify activities that would bring mutual benefits.
- Cross-representation in the activities of the other body:
  - Establish formal mechanisms for involvement in the activities of the other body, for example granting UN-GGIM: Europe observer status in the Conference of European Statisticians, and UNECE observer status in UN-GGIM: Europe meetings.
- Reporting on progress / work accomplished:
  - The UNECE Secretariat and UN-GGIM: Europe will prepare annual reports on collaboration activities, to be presented to the annual plenary sessions of UN-GGIM: Europe and the Conference of European Statisticians. Those bodies will be invited to comment on the activities reported, and to propose new ones.

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