

5TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

New York, USA, 5 - 7 August



The Fifth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) took place at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA from 5 to 7 August.

The UN-GGIM reports to the UN Assembly via the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ECOSOC has instructed UN-GGIM to work according to a five-year programme and to provide its first report in 2016. The principal purpose of the UN-GGIM is to play a leading role in setting the agenda for the development of global geospatial information management and to promote the use of geospatial information in addressing key global challenges.

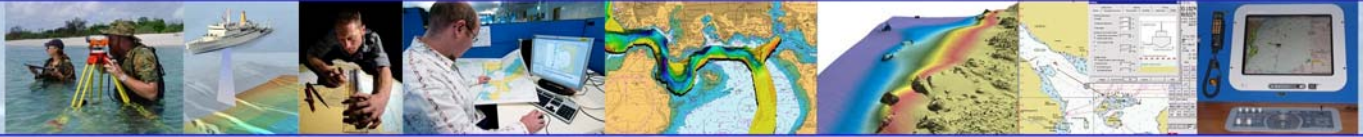
Representatives of over 80 UN Member States participated in the Session together with representatives from international organizations, including the IHO. The Session was attended by the greatest number of UN Member States so far, and a growing number of Observer Organizations. Representatives from the Hydrographic Offices of Cuba, Mexico, Oman and the USA were present in their respective delegations. President Robert Ward represented the IHO.

The Session was preceded by 28 associated side meetings including the 22nd meeting of the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM) which focussed on mapping activity to support disaster risk reduction, security and civil management, and briefings in support of the UN-GGIM meeting itself including a briefing on the benefits of implementing international geospatial data standards, in which the IHO was represented.

A number of the items on the agenda of UN-GGIM5 were of direct relevance to IHO Member States, particularly in relation to the contribution of hydrographic data and services to national and regional spatial data infrastructures. Underpinning much of the discussion during the Session was the “UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” which was agreed immediately before and is expected to be adopted at a UN Summit in September. The agenda for sustainable development includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will guide decisions taken by the UN over the next 15 years.



UN Headquarters, New York



The Committee noted with satisfaction that the UN General Assembly adopted its Resolution on a Global Geodetic Reference Frame for Sustainable Development (A/RES/69/266) in February before considering a report on the development of a list of fundamental data themes. Hydrography is reflected in the provisional list of themes using a number of terms, including: *hydrography, depth, elevation and depth, and water*. From an IHO perspective, these different terms need to be unified and standardised. The Committee decided to invite UN-GGIM Europe to liaise with other UN-GGIM regional groups to develop agreement on a minimum set of global fundamental geospatial data themes and to report to the next Session of the Committee.

The Committee adopted *A Guide to the Role of Standards in Geospatial Information Management* prepared by the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the IHO and its companion document as UN-GGIM reference documents. The IHO input to these documents was provided by the IHB and the Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure Working Group (MSDIWG).

The Committee heard that 63% of its responding Member States have indicated that they have carried out or plan to make significant changes to their national institutional arrangements for the management of geospatial information. These changes include the implementation of new policies to address data quality and availability; the establishment of new committees to reorganize existing activities for better synergies; and to increase participation to ensure wider representation and foster closer relationships with stakeholders. In this context, the continuing work of the IHO Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure Working Group (MSDIWG) and its task in assisting Member States in their role as custodians of national hydrographic data sets and their obvious part in national and global spatial data infrastructures is particularly relevant.

The Committee heard that many national geospatial information agencies are in the early stages of introducing and making use of volunteered geographic information (crowd-sourcing). Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI) would likely be a major emerging source for rapidly collecting geospatial data, change detection and the updating of datasets. However, there were concerns about the lack of appropriate quality assurance mechanisms and the general levels of participation. The challenges are, therefore, to identify the advantages and weaknesses of VGI from both the data provider and the data user perspectives, and to encourage Member States to develop best practices on the collection, quality assurance and application of VGI. The newly established IHO Crowd-Sourced Bathymetry Working Group is already considering these aspects on behalf of the IHO.

Copies of all the papers and report of the meeting are available on the GGIM website at: <http://ggim.un.org>

The sixth Session of UN-GGIM will take place at the UN Headquarters during the first week of August 2016.