



IHB File N° S1/5051-TA-005-3

CIRCULAR LETTER 04/2015
13 January 2015

SHARED GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

References:

- A. IHO CL56/2014 dated 12 August - *Report on the 4th Session of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management*
- B. IHO CL 02/2015 dated 6 January - *GEOSS Data Management Principles*

Dear Hydrographer,

1. As mentioned in the IHB report on the 4th session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), the Committee of Experts has been developing “shared statement of principles on the management of geospatial information” (reference A). The objectives are to “*clarify the distinctive social obligations inherent in the professional practices of the geospatial information management community, and to enhance the trust placed by the public on geospatial information*” and, to that effect, to “*provide a set of values to guide the choices and actions of geospatial organisations within Member States*”¹.
2. Based on the outcome of the 4th session of UN-GGIM, a working group on the development of a statement of shared principles, composed of representatives from Australia, France, Mexico, New Zealand and the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), has prepared the attached draft for global consultation.
3. The Directing Committee supports the general thrust of the proposed principles, noting that they are in line with the relevant IHO resolutions and recommendations. However, we consider that further refinement of the draft would be welcome to ensure that the principles are easier to understand in order to be implemented. We also note that the UN-GGIM initiative is related to the parallel development by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) of “Data Management Principles” that was reported under Reference B, and that further coordination between the two activities would be beneficial to all stakeholders.
4. The Secretariat of the UN-GGIM has set a deadline for comments on the draft *shared statement of principles* of 28 February 2015. Member States are invited to submit their comments, if any, either directly to the UN-GGIM Secretariat (point of contact: Ms Cecille Blake at blake1@un.org) **before 28 February**, or through the IHB (info@iho.int) **not later than 20 February**. Member States may also consider liaising with their national representation at UN-GGIM.

¹ Extracts from document E/C.20/2014/10/Add.1 submitted to the 4th UN-GGIM session (see: http://ggim.un.org/ggim_committee.html).

5. The IHO Working Group on Marine Spatial Data Infrastructures is also invited to review and comment on the draft as appropriate.

6. It is foreseen that a revised draft of the *shared statement of principles* will be circulated for final review and subsequently submitted for adoption by the UN-GGIM at its 5th session from 5 to 7 August 2015.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,



Robert WARD
President

Enclosure:

A Statement of Shared Guiding Principles for Geospatial Information Management – draft dated 15 December 2014 (*in English only*).

Distribution:

- IHO Member States
- Chair and Vice-Chair of the IHO MSDIWG (by e-mail)

A Statement of Shared Guiding Principles for Geospatial Information Management

Preamble

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management acknowledges:

- (a) High quality geospatial information is critical for evidence-based analysis and informed policy decision-making in support of sustainable development, economic growth, poverty eradication, peace and security, disaster risk reduction, and addressing the adverse impact of climate change;
- (b) The opportunity to use geospatial information to foster mutual knowledge and cooperation among the Member States and peoples of an increasingly connected world, demanding openness and transparency;
- (c) The essential trust of the public in the reliability of authoritative geospatial information is essential and depends on recognition of and adherence to fundamental values and principles that are the basis of any society. In this context, professional independence and accountability of geospatial organizations are crucial;
- (d) The need for precepts, values and beliefs that clarify the distinctive social responsibilities of geospatial information authorities, encourage and support stakeholders at all levels to make the right choices that foster public trust and inspire confidence in geospatial information, and to attract partners and investment;
- (e) In order to be effective, guiding principles have to be enshrined in the institutional frameworks that govern geospatial information organizations and understood at all political levels and by all stakeholders in national agencies.

Shared Guiding Principles

of a strong, successful and relevant geospatial information organization:

Innovation

1. **Geospatial advocacy:**

is reinforced by steadfast advocates promoting applications of geospatial information that support sustainable development, economic growth, poverty eradication, peace and security, disaster risk reduction, and addressing the adverse impact of climate change.

2. **Collaboration and coordination:**

encourage national, regional and global collaborations fundamental to the facilitation of improvements in the development, management and use of geospatial data as well as the integration of statistical data and other information in order to supply services meeting user needs.

3. **Continuous development and recognition of work:**

commit to policies and practices that ensure the continuous development, professional competence and ethical practices of geospatial information practitioners.

4. **Agility and adaptiveness:**

address and take advantage of institutional, technological and other advancements in support of the development and delivery of products and services.

5. **Open data access:**

adopt access policies that maximize the use of geospatial information, and promote efficiency and effectiveness of decision making.

Governance

6. **Use of and adherence to geospatial standards:**

embrace the development of, adherence to, and use of nationally and internationally recognized geospatial standards. Utilization of standards will facilitate the effective and efficient creation, sharing, exchange and use of

geospatial data, the open transfer of data among organizations, platforms and applications, and encourage innovation, reduce transaction costs, increase transparency, allow international compatibility and cooperation within the marketplace.

7. **Ownership and accountability:**

facilitate trust amongst geospatial data creators and providers, have a clear understanding and use of geospatial data through the publication of metadata, including ownership information and technical specifications (i.e. in particular currency, data models, quality and accuracy definitions). This will support informed and fit-for-purpose use and interpretation of geospatial data. Data creators and providers are responsible for compliance to the specifications of geospatial data sets made available for consumption and use.

8. **Transparency:**

identify sources and the processes that are used to create and provide official geospatial data.

9. **Respect and confidentiality:**

exhibit high levels of regard and consideration to their stakeholders in the execution of their daily operations. Particular care is to be exercised to protect the confidentiality of geospatial information that may adversely impact an individual, community and/or Member States. Personal data is to be especially respected and protected.

10. **Standards of service:**

employ geospatial information management best practices and solutions, and pursue excellence in the delivery of geospatial data and services. Appropriate access, fairness (value for money) and equity are to be accorded to all stakeholders.

11. **Institutional framework:**

encourage and create inclusive and participatory legal, policy and administrative frameworks to manage data ownership, data quality, intellectual property and confidentiality issues.

12. **Expertise:** value national expertise in geospatial information and knowledge, in order to, where appropriate, comment on and validate the accuracy of geospatial datasets covering the national territory, seeking their overall consistency, in order to advise on matters of application, interpretation or use of geospatial information.

13. **International Cooperation and Harmonization:** engage in bilateral and multilateral cooperation in geospatial information management to foster effective and efficient geospatial management systems in all Member States. Harmonization of national geospatial data and services at regional and global levels is encouraged in order to meet the needs of supranational users.

Compliance

14. **Sovereignty of Member States:**

avail authoritative geospatial data, that is, official and accurate data, to support public policies and administrative procedures, is an essential requirement of Member States' autonomy, sovereignty and economic development. These data should be considered and treated as a base infrastructure for each country, to be created and maintained as other base infrastructures.

15. **Adherence to law:**

observe laws, regulations and administrative practices of the Member States, within which they operate, as well as international laws and conventions, and their stakeholders made aware of those laws and conventions which govern and are related to their operations. The intellectual property of geospatial data creators are to be protected and geospatial data received from non-primary sources must be acknowledged.