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CIRCULAR LETTER 56/2014
12 August 2014

**REPORT ON THE 4th SESSION OF THE UN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON GLOBAL
GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

Reference: IHO CL51/2014 dated 15 July - *Fourth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on global Geospatial Information Management. New York, USA 6-8 August 2014*

Dear Hydrographer,

1. As anticipated in the Reference, the fourth session of the *UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management* (UN-GGIM) took place at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA from 6 to 8 August. The UN-GGIM reports to the UN Assembly via the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). 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.
2. The 4th session of UN-GGIM was attended by over 80 UN Member States, which is the greatest number of UN Member States so far, though very few delegations included representatives of hydrographic offices. President Robert Ward represented the IHO.
3. Of particular importance for IHO Member States is a growing awareness by UN-GGIM delegates of the relevance and the potential contribution of hydrographic information in the context of global geospatial data infrastructures. This highlights the need for hydrographic offices to adopt a proactive role in establishing their place within national spatial data infrastructures. In that 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 are of particular importance. The importance of the IHO-IOC GEBCO project as a fundamental part of the global geospatial information infrastructure is significant, too.
4. A number of the agenda items included topics 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.
5. The GGIM endorsed the work of its working group on establishing a Global Geodetic Reference Frame (GGRF) with the intention of proposing a UN Resolution on the subject to the General Assembly. Prompted by an intervention from the IHO, the Committee noted that the vertical component of the GGRF was particularly relevant to hydrography and recognised that appropriate input should be sought from the IHO by the working group.
6. The GGIM reviewed the progress of its working group established to consider a Global Map for Sustainable Development (GM4SD). The working group has worked closely with the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM) and received input from the IHO emphasizing the need to address the lack of appropriate bathymetric data for many parts of the world's seas, oceans and coastal areas and the need to ensure a linkage between land and marine data in many national spatial data infrastructures. President Ward re-iterated these issues at the 21st meeting of the ISCGM that was held immediately prior to the UN-GGIM.

7. The GGIM accepted a combined report on the implementation and adoption of standards for the global geospatial information community prepared by the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the IHO. The IHO input to the report was provided by the IHB and the Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure Working Group (MSDIWG). The Committee agreed that the report will be adopted as a UN-GGIM reference document.

8. The Committee endorsed the work done so far on establishing a shared statement of principles on the management of geospatial information. The current draft declares thirteen principles grouped under three broad themes: *innovation, governance* and *compliance*.

9. Copies of all the papers and the report of the meeting are available on the GGIM website at: <http://ggim.un.org>. The key documents of relevance to IHO Member States will also be included as references in the MSDIWG section on the IHO website.

10. The Directing Committee will continue to monitor the activities of the UN-GGIM and initiate IHO contributions as appropriate. Noting that the focus in the UN-GGIM is being placed on geospatial data management services rather than on the compilation and provision of maps and charts, the Directing Committee invites Member States to carefully consider the significance of this trend and the impact that this may have on the traditional roles and responsibilities of hydrographic offices in the future.

11. The fifth session of UN-GGIM will take place at the UN Headquarters from 5 to 7 August 2015.

On behalf of the Directing Committee

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Ward', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert WARD
President