

**3rd IHO-HSSC Meeting
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Paper for the Information of HSSC

**IHO Participation in the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial
Information Management
and
Relationships with Geospatial Organisations and Corporations**

Submitted by:	IHB
Executive Summary:	This paper reports on the IHO's representation at the 1 st UN-GGIM meeting and the resultant encouraging discussions with various organisations participating in the GGIM process.
Related Papers:	HSSC 3-INF3 – <i>World Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management</i>

Introduction

1. This paper provides up to date information on the IHO's representation at the 1st meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM) reported in HSSC-3 INF3 and the resultant encouraging discussions with various organisations participating in the GGIM process.

2. In July, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established a UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM). This followed a series of annual preparatory meetings at which the Directing Committee represented the IHO. The UN-GGIM held its first meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea, on 26 October 2011, immediately after a three-day forum on global geospatial information management. 350 participants representing 90 UN Member States and 37 representatives from international organisations attended the forum. Several UN delegations at the forum included ministers directly responsible for national geospatial services in their respective countries.

UN Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management

3. The forum and the first meeting of the GGIM was a most significant event, representing the first time such a high level of State representation had gathered anywhere in the world to discuss geospatial information management. At the heart of the discussions was the fundamental importance to society and its governments of establishing effective spatial data infrastructures (SDI). Although the discussion and the examples used in the Forum were centered exclusively on land-based initiatives, several of the delegations acknowledged that the maritime domain is an integral part of the ongoing considerations of the UN-GGIM. The role of the IHO and its Member State HO's was fully acknowledged in this respect.

4. At the conclusion of the forum, the delegates endorsed the *Seoul Declaration*, that:

- expressed support for the initiative of the UN to foster geospatial information management among UN Member States, international organizations, and the private sector, and in this regard:
- to take actions to foster and strengthen national, regional and global cooperation with the aim of developing an interconnected global community of practice on geospatial information under the umbrella of the United Nations;
- to devise effective processes for jointly and collaboratively promoting common frameworks and standards, as well as harmonized definitions and methods for the treatment of national geospatial data in order to enhance geospatial information management at the national, regional and global level;
- to share experiences in policy-making, supporting legislation, and funding strategies, to encourage and develop best practices in geospatial information management (ie, collection, storage, maintenance and dissemination) at all levels, including integration of spatial data with thematic data from other sources, and to facilitate and promote capacity development in the developing countries.

UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

5. The first meeting of the UN-GGIM was mainly administrative in nature – reviewing its terms of reference and rules of procedure. In addition it established working groups to identify specific objectives of the GGIM and a work programme for the next five years. The documentation for the GGIM and all relevant information are maintained on a dedicated UN website at: <http://ggim.un.org/>. The next meeting of the GGIM will take place at UN Headquarters in New York from 13 to 15 August 2012. The next GGIM global forum will be held in Dohar, Qatar in early December 2012.

6. The aims and ambitions of the GGIM are entirely in line with the established objectives and the ongoing achievements of the IHO regarding the standardisation and ease of access and interoperability of geospatial data, capacity building for those States where improvements are required, and progress towards the establishment of robust spatial data infrastructures that encompass the maritime domain. In many ways the IHO and its Member State organisations can be seen as being in advance of the global objectives of the UN-GGIM, through its well-established cartographic and data exchange standards, its policies on data availability, its recognition of the value of MSDI, and its capacity building programme.

7. In effect, the GGIM is seeking to foster the development in all States of a robust and effective spatial data infrastructure (SDI). The IHO Resolutions on Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI), the existence of the MSDI Working Group reporting to the Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee, and the regular consideration of MSDI by Regional Hydrographic Commissions can all be seen as important contributions in this respect.

8. The GGIM forum and the UN-GGIM meeting provided the opportunity for informal discussions between the IHB representative and many of the senior representatives of other international organizations and industry that were participating as invited observers. Senior representatives of a number of geospatial data providers, systems suppliers, and standards organisations, including Google, ESRI, the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), EuroGI, ISO and others were at the meetings. They all expressed their wish to support the IHO in its global efforts to improve hydrographic capability and knowledge.

9. In relation to the IHO technical programme, the following summary of discussions is relevant:

- **International Cartographic Association (ICA).** The recently elected President of ICA indicated that under his Presidency, the ICA wishes to reinvigorate its association with the IHO – particularly by way of mutual cooperation and assistance and an avoidance of duplication of effort on particular activities. In this regard, the ICA may be able to provide particular contributions regarding such things as digital data portrayal and innovative map presentation. At the same time, the IHO may be able to contribute a better understanding among cartographers of the unique requirements of the maritime community. He also expressed a wish to investigate cooperative awareness and capacity building programmes relating to SDI.
- **International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM).** The President of ISCGM was pleased to hear that significant progress has been made recently on making data from GEBCO and from the IHO digital Bathymetry Data Base more available to appropriate organisations. ISCGM is keen to improve its Global Mapping Project, launched in 1996. Global Map is an international cooperation initiative through voluntary participation of national mapping organizations in the world, and led by ISCGM. Global Map aims to develop a digital geo-information framework ensuring spatial resolution at 1km, with standardized specifications and available to everyone at marginal cost.
- **Fédération Internationale des Géomètres (FIG).** The President of FIG wishes to see better coordination between the IHO and FIG Commission 4 (Hydrography) programmes to avoid duplication of effort and to better use the knowledge, experience and limited resources of both organisations. It was identified that there may be overlaps in the work of FIG Commission 4 in relation to standards and guidelines for hydrography, multi-sensor systems for hydrographic applications, and maritime and marine spatial information management and the work taking place under the HSSC.

Conclusion

10. The establishment of the UN-GGIM is an important development that has the potential to assist the IHO and its Member State organisations in delivering appropriate services in accordance with their obligations. For the first time, access to geospatial information, including hydrographic information, and spatial data infrastructures are on the agenda of the United Nations at the highest ministerial and diplomatic levels – in effect, reporting to the General Assembly through ECOSOC.

11. In time, and with continued input from the IHO and the support of its Member States, there is now an opportunity to encourage top-down government interest and support for national hydrographic programmes in a

way that previously did not exist. At the same time, the UN-GGIM has already provided a most useful opportunity for the better coordination of the IHO programme with those of other international organisations, corporations and standards organizations at the top-level. With the support of Member States, the Directing Committee will continue to afford a high priority to the on-going development and progress of the UN-GGIM.

Action Required of HSSC

12. The HSSC is requested to **note** this report.