

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Eighty-eighth meeting
Geneva, 16 December 2016

Item 4

Informal Document No. **2016/62**

**Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution on
strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial
information management**

Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information in the ECE region

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

At its 86th meeting, on 16 September 2016, EXCOM considered a paper (Informal document No.2016/43) on the UNECE response to the recent ECOSOC Resolution on Strengthening Institutional Arrangements on Geospatial Information Management. This paper highlighted the key points of the ECOSOC Resolution (E/RES/2016/27), including a request “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 (UN-GGIM)” (op 11).

After an exchange of views, the EXCOM expressed support for UNECE to provide relevant support, upon request and as appropriate, to the work of the regional body of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management. In this regard, EXCOM requested the secretariat to prepare a proposal, in collaboration with UN-GGIM:Europe, to (i) further describe the scope of such work, (ii) consider possible partnerships in this work, and to (iii) elaborate different options for mobilizing additional resources for such work.

The secretariat would like to inform the EXCOM on progress made.

Consultations with UN DESA and UN-GGIM:Europe

UNECE initiated consultations on the way forward with the Statistical Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), which provides the secretariat for the UN-GGIM:Global initiative and has guided the work of the UN-GGIM:Europe since its creation in 2014.

Further, elements of a draft proposal were conveyed to UN-GGIM:Europe to explore the possible scope, partnerships, options for mobilizing resources, and the services that the secretariat can provide to support the work of UN-GGIM:Europe. The Executive Committee of the UN-GGIM:Europe discussed the UNECE draft proposal at its meeting on 17 November 2016. It expressed support for the long term goal of sustainable support by the UNECE to the work of the UN-GGIM:Europe and its Executive Committee. UN-GGIM:Europe further informed UNECE that a proposal and modalities for closer collaboration with UNECE would be discussed with all its members at their annual plenary session in the first half 2017 in Brussels.

Deepening collaboration

The collaboration between both entities is already deepening.

Within the existing resources, the Statistical Division of UNECE will:

- Participate in the UN-GGIM:Europe Executive Committee meeting in January 2017 to develop a shared understanding of the proposal for secretarial support through UNECE and initiate a process of working together more closely.
- Proceed with the joint organization by UNECE and UN-GGIM:Europe of the Workshop on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial standards to be held in autumn 2017 in Sweden. This Workshop is part of the 2017 Statistical Programme, approved by the Conference of European Statisticians, and in line with CES Bureau decision to strengthen the work between statisticians and geospatial experts in the UNECE region.
- Participate in the annual plenary session of UN-GGIM:Europe in the first half of 2017 to discuss the UNECE support to UN-GGIM:Europe in future in the context of the UN-GGIM:Global initiatives, the ECOSOC resolution and the EXCOM decision of 16 September 2016.
- Explore options for raising extra-budgetary funds and countries' donations for supporting some of the above activities and possible capacity building activities to the EECCA countries.

With additional resources the Secretariat could:

- Provide greater support for the technical activities of UN-GGIM:Europe, such as the work of the 3 ad-hoc Working Groups that currently exist – (i) WG on Core Data; (ii) WG on Data Integration; and (iii) WG on Geodetic Reference Frame. The first two WGs are closely related to similar work under the Conference of European Statisticians;
- Facilitate the exchange of information and promote inclusion of all UNECE member States, such as the EECCA countries, Canada, United States and others from the UNECE region;
- Develop and support capacity building activities:

For this to be achieved in the medium to long term, an ideal situation would be to create a small unit composed of 2-3 experts. A more elaborated proposal will be submitted to a future meeting of EXCOM.

Possible other partnerships

There are several initiatives at the European and global levels that are in some way related to the work of UN-GGIM:Europe. A future UNECE secretariat support for UN-GGIM:Europe would encourage the further development of existing partnerships, and the creation of new ones.

At the level of the European Union, the European Environment Agency, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, and Eurostat have participated as observers in meetings of UN-GGIM:Europe. There have already been two events jointly organized by UN-GGIM:Europe and Eurostat. The European Union INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe) Directive, and associated groups and conferences, is also a natural partner.

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) based in Geneva is a voluntary partnership of governments and organizations. It aims to connect the demand for sound and timely environmental information with the supply of data and information about the Earth. The Secretariat has contacted the GEO to explore areas of common interest. Most recently the UNECE was invited to the 2017 GEO Work Programme Symposium to be held back-to-back with the 37th International Symposium of Remote Sensing (ISRSE) on 8-13 May 2017.

Within the UN Secretariat, the scope for partnerships between regional UN-GGIM groups could be enhanced, as the UN regional commissions gradually take a more active role in this initiative, particularly in the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific regions. The existing close links between UNECE and the GGIM global secretariat in New York, will be maintained to facilitate collaboration and coordination between the regional and global levels.

With other sub-programmes within the UNECE, geospatial activities could enhance existing areas of UNECE work, including transport networks, smart cities, housing and land management, and cross border pollution and water management, and the growing demands for the closer integration of statistical and geospatial information. In particular, geospatial information will enhance the capacity of UNECE member States to meet the new information challenges related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The way forward: timeline

Establishing closer collaboration between UNECE and UN-GGIM:Europe, including possible UNECE support to UN-GGIM:Europe will take some time to reach common understanding of the modalities of working together, define the scope of the work and elaborate the resources needed for this support. The Secretariat will continue the consultations with UN-GGIM:Europe to deepen the dialogue and reach common understanding in the course of 2017.

At present, Netherlands provides financial resources for secretariat support to the work of UN-GGIM:Europe under an agreement that is in place until end of 2017. Alternative arrangements will need to be considered from 2018 onward.

The secretariat will inform the EXCOM on developments in this area at a future meeting when greater progress is made.

Draft Decision

EXCOM is invited to consider submitting the following decision for consideration at the 67th Session of the Economic Commission for Europe:

The Economic Commission for Europe,

Taking note of ECOSOC Resolution (E/RES/2016/27), which “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”,

Emphasizing the importance for closer integration of statistical and geospatial information to enhance the capacity of UNECE member States to meet the new information challenges related to the reporting on the SDGs and the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Emphasizing the close linkages between the work on Geospatial Information Management and the work in UNECE on statistics and the benefit of having greater geospatial knowledge and capability to enhance other areas of UNECE work such as environmental issues (cross-border pollution and water management), transport networks, smart cities, housing and land management,

Decides to encourage UNECE to progressively engage in geospatial activities and in close consultation with UN-GGIM:Europe to offer its support to the activities of UN-GGIM:Europe from 2017 onwards with the aim of presenting a proposal to the UNECE Executive Committee for decision before December 2017.