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Economic Commission for Africa
Regional Committee of United Nations Global
Geospatial Information Management for Africa
Eighth meeting

Addis Ababa, 24-28 October 2022

Concept note

I. Background and justification

1. The Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa was established to coordinate African geospatial development and to contribute to the wider global initiative. Over the past decade, the Regional Committee has adopted realistic approaches to ensure that systematic and comprehensive frameworks are put in place, along with related policies, resources and systems to make geospatial information technology easily accessible to decision-makers and the community in a coordinated way. To ensure that appropriate geospatial information products are used in decision-making, the Regional Committee supports its Member States in developing a holistic vision that fosters the effective use of geospatial products and resources to address emerging global challenges and support various social and economic sectors in Africa. The roles of the Regional Committee include the following:

(a) Articulating policies and strategies with appropriate guidelines for the establishment of local, national, regional and global spatial data infrastructures and their linkages with other plans and strategies;

(b) Developing capacities and capabilities in a transformative and holistic manner with a long-term vision to increase spatial literacy, spatial awareness and navigational skills;

(c) Maintaining an authoritative data repository (fundamental and thematic), information and knowledge resources, tools, applications and services, with greater use of common standards and interoperability for metadata, naming, coordinate references, etc.;

(d) Encouraging and facilitating the integration of statistics with geospatial information to attain viable and meaningful outcomes, analysis and visualization of data to support and track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) Strengthening advocacy for the specific needs and interests of Africa within international mechanisms.

2. The fifth meeting of the Regional Committee was held in Kigali from 18 to 22 November 2019 in parallel with the AfricaGIS 2019 Conference. The premise of the meeting was that Africa had gained substantive momentum in the geospatial information sector, thereby assuring the global community that Africa was serious about contributing to the development of geospatial information. The meeting was attended by more than 80 participants, including



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representatives of 27 African countries and observers from international organizations, including the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission and the secretariat of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, as well as representatives from academia, industry organizations and the private sector. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to share knowledge and best practices related to the development of geospatial information in Africa, to raise awareness of the benefits of utilizing geospatial information for sustainable development, and to consider policies and measures that African countries could adopt to ensure that the activities of the Regional Committee were implemented successfully in Africa.

3. The sixth meeting of the Regional Committee was organised virtually in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This unprecedented global health crisis, has put the national mapping agencies in a difficult situation since the start of 2020. Support for national mapping systems was therefore needed now more than ever. The various strategies adopted by Governments to contain the pandemic have mitigated the damage it has caused in all social, economic and environmental sectors, including in mapping. Nevertheless, the measures have harmed the implementation of mapping plans and the ability of national mapping agencies to respond to data needs and mapping services in a timely manner.

4. The sixth meeting offered the opportunity to reflect on the importance on how geospatial information could contribute and be integrated into national priorities to respond to COVID-19. Member States were then able to appraise resilience strategies that ensure continuity in the production of fundamental and thematic geospatial data sets. The strategies have been made possible by the introduction of business continuity measures during the COVID-19 pandemic and have greatly facilitated the gradual recovery observed at national mapping agencies. The strategies include the following: teleworking of personnel; the adoption of new methods for the delivery of data services in response to major changes in data needs; the consideration of new and alternative data sources; and the introduction or enhancement of other data-collection methods. So far, the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated how national mapping agencies and partners that support mapping can adapt during a crisis to ensure that data needs are fully met.

5. The main objective of the seventh meeting of the Regional Committee, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 22 to 26 November 2021, was to allow participants to assess progress in implementing recommendations from previous meetings. Participants shared knowledge and best practices regarding the development of geospatial information in Africa, raised awareness of the benefits of geospatial information for sustainable development, and examined policies and measures that African countries could adopt to ensure the successful implementation of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management initiative in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. The outcomes of the seventh meeting contributed to the global achievement of the vision of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management and encouraged substantive progress in the implementation of the Regional Committee's initiative in Africa. The outcomes of the meeting included:

(a) Consolidation of the consensus and the galvanizing of political will for the harnessing of geospatial information technology to further African development goals;

(b) Assistance with efforts to address certain growing global concerns;

(c) Reporting on the activities undertaken by ECA, Member States and the working groups of the Regional Committee;

(d) Discussion of policy issues relating to geospatial information at the national and regional levels that required Member States, ECA, partners and other stakeholders to adopt decisions, pass resolutions or make recommendations;

(e) Presentations delivered by guests (such as geospatial equipment manufacturers) to raise awareness of new developments in geospatial information;

(f) Discussion of special topics, such as a geospatial financial appropriation framework and second administrative level boundaries.

7. The eighth meeting is also expected to help States to consolidate the consensus already adopted on the Regional Committee and to review its structure, functions and operations in Africa while defining its funding mechanisms.

II. Objectives

8. The main aim of the meeting is to review the progress made on the recommendations and actions of previous meetings of the Regional Committee. Meeting participants will:

(a) Review and share knowledge and best practices related to the development of geospatial information in Africa;

(b) Increase their awareness of the benefits of utilizing geospatial information for sustainable development;

(c) Consider potential policies, measures and steps for African countries to ensure the successful implementation of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management in the region;

(d) Promote networking among institutions and practitioners in geoinformation and generate synergy at the national level to facilitate its management;

(e) Foster linkages with partners and other regional subcommittees after the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. The meeting outcomes will help to consolidate the consensus and drive the political will to leverage geospatial information technology to support the African development agenda and address emerging global challenges.

III. Issues to be addressed

10. The issues to be examined by meeting participants will include:

(a) Reporting on the activities undertaken by ECA, Member States and the working groups;

(b) Policy issues relating to geoinformation policy at the national and regional levels (such as geospatial strategies after the pandemic) that require a decision, resolution or recommendation to be issued by Member States, ECA or partners and other stakeholders;

(c) Technical issues flagged by Member States or stakeholders or tabled by the ECA secretariat;

(d) New trends featuring presentations on new developments in geospatial information to increase awareness;

(e) Focus on a special topic, such as the geospatial response after the pandemic.

IV. Outcomes

11. The outcomes of the eighth meeting will contribute to the achievement of the global vision of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management and will encourage more substantive progress to be made for the African region. It is expected that the meeting will help to consolidate the consensus that exists and that participants will conduct a much-needed review of the structure, functions and operations of the Regional Committee and define its funding mechanisms.

12. Countries are aware of the opportunities and facilities offered by pan-African institutions and partners in response to the impact that COVID-19 has had and the repercussions of the pandemic for the future. It is critical that countries take advantage of these opportunities to ensure that geospatial activities are supported and will continue to be supported after the pandemic.

V. Venue and date

13. The meeting is scheduled to be held from 24 to 28 October 2022 at the United Nations Conference Centre, in Addis Ababa.

VI. Participants

14. Meeting participants will include:

(a) Members of the Executive Bureau of the Regional Committee;

(b) Convenors of the working groups;

(c) National officials working in the fields of mapping, cartography, surveying and statistics;

(d) Experts selected from academia, research institutions, government, civil society and the private sector;

(e) Representatives of subregional and regional organizations.

VII. Administrative arrangements and logistics

15. Contacted participants are requested to confirm their participation to the secretariat of the Regional Committee (i.e. ECA) as soon as possible, but not later than 15 September 2022. ECA will organize the local logistical arrangement including hotel reservations, airport reception and transport to and from hotels. Participants will be responsible for organizing their entry visas and vaccinations prior to their travel.

VIII. Contact information

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