



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

20th UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (UNRCC-AP)
Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, 6 – 9 October 2015

Opening Statement

Mr. Greg Scott
United Nations Statistics Division

Your Excellency's,

Yeo Hyung Koo, Vice Minister for Land, Infrastructure and Transport, Republic of Korea
Won Hee-ryong, Governor of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, Republic of Korea.

Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

On behalf of the United Nations, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Twentieth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (UNRCC-AP). I also warmly welcome you to beautiful and majestic Jeju Island, also known as the "Island of the Gods" and for very good reason. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea for hosting this United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference in partnership with the United Nations. Thank you for giving us the opportunity once again, as you so kindly did for the inaugural session of UN-GGIM in Seoul in 2011, to take up this ambitious and important global agenda and to bring the discussion to this dynamic region. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the people and Provincial Government of Jeju for welcoming us to convene this important UN Regional Cartographic Conference here in Jeju.

We are very pleased to see so many professionals gathered here today, representing countries from all over the world, as well as international organizations and associations, academia, and many national delegates. Welcome.

I would like to acknowledge at this juncture the special contributions of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP), especially its President, Mr. Li Pengde, its Vice-President, Mr. Byong-Nam Choe, its Secretary, Mr. Hiroshi Murakami, and its Secretariat. Their tireless efforts in the preparation of this Conference have made our meeting a great success already. I would also like to acknowledge the considerable efforts, support and services provided by our technical hosts the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII).

As you will recall, the Nineteenth UNRCC-AP was held in Bangkok in October 2012. In some respects it seems so long ago, as much progress has been made in the past 3 years. At that time the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) had only just been established. However, and as a strong signal of support, the Conference adopted a resolution on enhancing the role of the regional committee, then PCGIAP, in close cooperation and coordination with UN-GGIM. This resolution resulted in a new name for the regional committee, being UN-GGIM-AP, a renewed mandate, and regularly reporting its work and progress to UN-GGIM. In taking this leadership, UN-GGIM-AP actually established the modalities for a regional architecture of UN-GGIM that has seen the regional committees for Asia-Pacific, the Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Arab States all successfully established – and in only 3 short years.

In 2012 this Conference also adopted a very important resolution urging “the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management to consult with Member States to adopt and sustain a global geodetic reference frame and provide a road map for its implementation”. Who would have anticipated at that time, that the ultimate outcome of that particular resolution would evolve into the adoption of the resolution ‘A global geodetic reference frame for sustainable development’ by the United Nations General Assembly in February this year? A very significant outcome.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to now turn in more detail to 2015, which is a watershed year for global development. On one hand, the Millennium Development Goals, the overarching development framework for the world for the past 15 years, come to an end; and on the other hand, a new and ambitious post-2015 development agenda begins. ‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, which Heads of States have just signed in New York on 25 September, will be the agreed global and united policy to manage and transform the social, economic and environmental dimensions of humanity and our planet over the next 15 years. The 2030 Agenda will be anchored by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets, and a global indicator framework, in order to measure and monitor progress. It will also capture

specific and separate global United Nations system outcomes on disaster risk reduction, climate change, and financing for development.

In this regard, it is fitting that our conference theme this year ‘Geospatial Information for the Global Development Agenda’ is dedicated to considering the role of geospatial information in sustainable development, including disaster management. This is an important issue for discussion and the timing to do so could not be better, and I commend the organizing Bureau for their foresight. Allow me to briefly mention four particular aspects on the current agenda, which will help address this conference theme in more detail, namely: the geodetic reference frame; disaster risk management; regional spatial data infrastructures; and cadastre and land management. These are very important topics that address sustainable development challenges at national, regional as well as global levels.

As you may be aware, the 2030 Agenda specifically demands new data acquisition and integration approaches to improve the availability, quality, timeliness and disaggregation of data to support the implementation of the new development agenda at all levels – including to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including earth observation and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress. The Agenda also requests that by 2020, in just 5 years, we are able to “enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.”

Therefore, the global geospatial information community, particularly through national geospatial information agencies, has a unique opportunity to integrate geospatial information into the global development agenda in a more holistic and sustainable manner, specifically in measuring and monitoring the targets and indicators of the SDGs within a common framework. In your deliberations in the coming days, I urge the technical committees to consider how this can best be achieved with respect to each of the thematic topic areas that will be discussed.

2015 is also the time in which our global intergovernmental mechanism, UN-GGIM, considers the key strategic directions that it will need to take in the coming period. This is driven by a requirement of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). When the Council established UN-GGIM in 2011, it did so with the provision that the Committee of Experts be (at least initially) “established and administered within existing resources and organized accordingly” and requested the Committee to present to ECOSOC in 2016 “a comprehensive review of all aspects of its work and operations, in order to allow Member States to assess its effectiveness.”

At its fifth session in August 2015, the Committee of Experts considered a report prepared by the Secretariat that provided initial elements of the requested review to ECOSOC. The Committee recognized that the submission of the review report to the Council in 2016 provides a unique opportunity to strengthen the mandate of the Committee and the subsidiary machinery of the Council in the area of geospatial information. The Committee requested the Bureau to reach out to the other subsidiary bodies of the Council, including the Regional Cartographic Conferences, to engage in a joint reflection over the coming months, with a view to presenting a common proposal in 2016. In this regard, your views on aligning the role of the UNRCC-AP with the mandate of UN-GGIM to streamline the overall work in the geospatial information field will contribute to the proposal to be submitted to ECOSOC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your professional support and inputs have been enormously valuable in evolving UN-GGIM thus far. Within the context of this regional forum, I look forward to your continued contributions, and your guidance in substantively moving the Committee’s global agenda forward as we consider the new development agenda, and the future role and mandates of geospatial information. I wish you all a productive, but also enjoyable conference, and very much look forward to your deliberations and outcomes.

Thank you.