



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

19th UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (UNRCC-AP)
ESCAP Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand, 29 October – 1 November 2012

Opening Statement

Mr. Paul Cheung, Director
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman

His Excellency, Group Captain Anudith Nakornthap, Minister for Information and Communication Technology of Thailand,

Distinguished Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Nineteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific. We are very pleased to see so many professionals gathered here, representing countries from all over the world as well as international organizations and associations. I want to acknowledge at this juncture the special contributions of the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific (PCGIAP), especially its President, Mr. Li Pengde, its Vice-President, Mr. Hiroshi Murakami, its Secretary, Mr. Im Joo-Bin, and its secretariat. Their tireless efforts in the preparation of this Conference have made this meeting a true success. I would also like to acknowledge the services provided by our host the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The Eighteenth Conference, held in Bangkok three years ago, adopted resolutions and recommendations which focused on the role of geospatial information – including aspects of data access, integration, sharing, management and enablement – in addressing global, regional and national issues, such as climate change, disaster management, and humanitarian needs. The conference also adopted a very important resolution on global geospatial information management, requesting the UN Secretariat to prepare a Report, for a future session of ECOSOC, on global coordination of geospatial information management. This included consideration for the creation of a UN global forum to share information and best practices. As you will be aware, the adoption of this resolution, and initiation of this process in 2009, resulted in the establishment of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) by ECOSOC in July 2011.

The Committee of Experts has now met twice: convening its inaugural session in October last year in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in conjunction with the First High Level Forum on GGIM; and held its second session this August at UN Headquarters in New York. I will not delve into the detailed decisions and outcomes of these past sessions as time does not permit. However, I wish to share with you an important observation that has direct relevance to our meeting today. In each of these sessions, in which many of you participated, UN-GGIM recognized that in order to be successful in building a sustainable intergovernmental mechanism for global geospatial information management, we need more national and regional discussion, consultations and collaborations on key issues, processes, and implementation strategies.

In this regard, it is very satisfying to know that PCGIAP has also recognized the essential role they and the UNRCC's play as established consultation mechanisms for dialogue and coordination among and between the Member States and international organizations. Therefore, it is fitting that our conference theme this year "UN-GGIM Vision for Asia and the Pacific Region" is dedicated to considering the vision of the UN-GGIM initiative and priority issues for the regional implementation strategy. This is an important issue for discussion and the timing to do so is right. I can assure you that the other regional geospatial information bodies (such as PC-IDEA) will be watching the process and observing the outcomes with much interest, as they too consider their future arrangements under the umbrella of UN-GGIM. In this respect, PCGIAP must be congratulated for leading the way thereby creating the path for others to follow.

There is another reason why the timing is right, one which provides us with additional motivation to achieve our goals. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, held last June in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, marked a significant milestone. Rio+20 launched a forward-looking blueprint for international cooperation that fully integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Rio+20 also recognized that reliable and authoritative geospatial information is crucial for both sustainable development and humanitarian

assistance. It provided a clear mandate for the future work of the UN Committee of Experts on GGIM. This high-level consensus also provides critical momentum and motivation for this 19th session of the UNRCC-AP.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset of this conference, and by way of example, allow me to highlight three particular aspects, which will help address the issues on the current agenda, namely: (i) the importance of a global geodetic reference framework; (ii) data sharing and integration for disaster management; and iii) place-based information management for economic growth. These are very important topics that address sustainable development challenges at national, regional as well as global levels.

(i) Geodetic reference framework for sustainable development

This topic is very relevant for PCGIAP and the Asia-Pacific region. At the second session of UN-GGIM the importance of the global geodetic infrastructure was a substantive and valuable discussion initiated by PCGIAP through its Geodesy Working Group. Although ‘position’ is the most fundamental concept in geospatial information management, it is not well understood what principles and methods are required to obtain positions. There appears to be considerable variability in how the accuracy of positioning is being determined within and across national boundaries, regionally, and globally. Positioning is a global capability that can be enhanced and strengthened through international cooperation, the collaborative use of global geodetic infrastructure, and the open availability of the collected data. In general, current networks are not presently effectively linked to each other or to the global reference frame, while the lack of data sharing impacts the accuracy and type of geodetic analysis that can be performed. The challenge for us is to identify strategies and methodologies to remedy this situation. Fortunately, we have many of the global experts present with us, and they will be convening a ‘Geodetic Consultation’ side event on Friday to develop a roadmap for

future action addressing global geodetic infrastructure, including identifying pathways for improved infrastructure development and geodetic data sharing.

(ii) Data sharing and integration for disaster management

The Rio+20 outcome document urged governments and organizations to commit to disaster risk reduction in order to enhance the resilience of cities and communities to disasters, according to their own circumstances and capacities. Specifically, it ‘recognized the importance of comprehensive hazard and risk assessments, and knowledge- and information-sharing, including reliable geospatial information’. Although this subject is well understood in the Asia-Pacific region, this mandate recognizes that geospatial information has a vital role to play in all phases of hazard and disaster risk management and reduction. Therefore, it should extend the ability for national geospatial information agencies to not only map their geography and topography, but to also acquire specific data to model and analyze those areas that are most vulnerable to natural hazards, particular in areas of high population, such as urban environments.

With this objective in mind the Second Hangzhou Forum will be convened in China in March 2013 to enable nations to better understand and implement natural hazard impact mapping and analysis in urban environments. With the theme ‘Development and Applications in Urban Hazard Mapping’, particular attention will be given to: framework geospatial datasets; natural hazards phenomena; exposure information; and vulnerability to particular hazards as key inputs to the hazard and risk assessment process. Additionally, the meeting will initiate discussion and directions for considering a global map for sustainable development.

(iii) Place-based information management for economic growth

Amidst all the global challenges I have mentioned, the imperative is for national leaders to grow their economies to ensure security and prosperity for their people. I am sure you will all agree that geospatial information is an enabler of economic growth. With

advancements in information technology, applications, web based services, mobile technologies, VGI, open data initiatives, and cloud computing services, developed and emerging economies are experiencing increasing returns on the investments made in geospatial information and place-based services. The challenge is for us to put in place the support needed to facilitate this growth globally. It is important to have geo-referenced data with increased accuracies, as it creates greater possibilities for application development, the delivery of new value added location services, and ultimately economic growth. But we must also put in place the policies, legislation and legal frameworks required to support the integration, sharing, access to and dissemination of this emerging place-based data. This is the role of the national geospatial information authorities. I therefore challenge the delegates today to identify and create the enablers that are needed to facilitate the increased use of geospatial information to support your country's economic growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that this conference, and its strong connection with the UN-GGIM vision for Asia-Pacific, provides an excellent opportunity to review and assess the key policy and technology issues, and the need for improved regional cooperation in global geospatial information management. It is also an opportunity to consider and address the key issues and directions that UN-GGIM will need to focus on in its program of work in the coming 1-2 years. Your professional support and inputs have been enormously valuable in evolving UN-GGIM thus far. I look forward to your continued contributions to this regional forum, and your guidance in substantively moving the UN-GGIM agenda forward.

Thank you.