



THE GLOBAL UNSDI INITIATIVE

UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATIONS NEED GLOBAL SDI TO SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN AID, FOOD SECURITY, POVERTY REDUCTION, DISASTER PLANNING, RECOVERY AND REMEDIATION

In October 2005 the United Nations Geospatial Information Working Group (UNGIWG), at their 6th Plenary Meeting in Addis Ababa, adopted a resolution to conceptualize and formulate the technical and institutional requirements for the establishment of a UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI) building on and expanding the work of the six UNGIWG Task Groups since 2000. In response, a comprehensive proposal was developed which was reviewed by the 7th UNGIWG plenary in Santiago, Chile, in early November 2006. This review resulted in the formulation of a comprehensive UNSDI strategy implementation document, a technical/institutional UNSDI Compendium document and a recommendation to engage in a structured dialogue between the UNSDI development process and ongoing spatial data infrastructure (SDI) developments at national and regional level.

The March 2007 meeting, ESA, Italy

For this UNGIWG convened a UNSDI Global Partners Meeting (UGPM) on 1-2 March 2007, hosted by the European Space Agency (ESA) in Frascati, Italy, with participation from 12 UN Organizations and some 60 representatives from governments, regional organizations, academia and the private sector. This very stimulating meeting focussed on comparing notes and experiences on SDI developments within the UN system and at national, regional and global level against a background of major application fields such as humanitarian assistance, global food security, forest resources assessment, environment, transport and logistics. The meeting resulted in a six-page "Frascati Statement" which provides an important element of the

bridge between the various ongoing SDI developments in which collaboration, coordination through effective communication, and committed partnerships are the central concepts.

UNSDI NCOs for liaison and communication

Another important element of the Frascati meeting was the presentation and discussion of a UNSDI-National Coordinating Office concept (NCO), presented by The Netherlands, and aimed at establishing an active and continuous two way 'channel' for exchanging spatial data and information between national governments and UN system agencies and programmes, with a strong emphasis on capacity building in developing countries, including contributions from the private sector. Currently such UNSDI-NCO's are active as experimental models in The Netherlands, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Spain, with active linkage to their respective national SDI initiatives. The regional SDI model developed by the European Commission under the INSPIRE Directive, which came into force on 15 May 2007, as the first step in creating an EU-wide SDI, is being considered as a potentially suitable point of departure for the UNSDI development process in both the institutional and technical sense.

The June 2007 meeting, UN, New York

A special UNGIWG meeting on 7-8 June in New York, with global participation by teleconference, was convened by the new UNGIWG Co-Chairs, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), following a two year term by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and World Food Program (WFP) which ended in April 2007. At this meeting, the ongoing work of the UNGIWG Task Groups, the UNSDI strategy implementation document and the "Frascati Statement" were reviewed in preparation for the UNGIWG-8 Plenary which will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 28-30 November this year.

A number of key UNSDI development decisions were made at the meeting, focussing on formalizing the UNSDI Strategy Implementation Plan within the entire UNGIWG Membership, which now stands at some 33 UN agencies, programmes and funds; the establishment of a Coordination Office for UNSDI at the UN in Geneva; for formulation of options for a UNSDI governance structure; a dedicated UNSDI communications strategy and the establishment of active partnerships identified at the Frascati meeting. These include, among others, INSPIRE, led by the EC's DG Joint Research Centre (JRC), the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the European Umbrella Organization for Geographic Information (EUROGI), the Association of Geographic Information Laboratories in Europe (AGILE), the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM).

About UNGIWG

UNGIWG was formed in 2000 to address common geospatial issues - maps, boundaries, data exchange, standards - that affect the work of UN Organizations and Member States. UNGIWG also works directly with non-governmental organizations, research institutions and industry to develop and maintain common geographic databases and geospatial technologies to enhance normative and operational capabilities. UNGIWG reports periodically to the UN Chief Executive Board (CEB) on progress made and priority issues.



Links

UN GI Working Group - www.ungiwg.org
UNSDI Compendium - www.ungiwg.org/docs/unsdi/UNSDI_Compendium_13_02_2007.pdf
UNSDI Strategy - www.ungiwg.org/docs/unsdi/UNSDI_Strategy_Implementation_Paper.pdf

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