

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Statistics Division**

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**First Meeting of the UN-GGIM:
Arab States¹**

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
24-25 February 2015

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives of the Meeting

1. The meeting was organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with the General Commission for Survey of Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate the process of the formal setting of the regional Committee, the UN-GGIM: Arab States, by adopting its rules of procedure and organizational structure, with the election of its Bureau (the Executive Committee), and the establishment of the Working Groups that will carry out its work programme for the next years.

Attendance

1. The meeting was attended by 36 participants of whom 28 were from the following 11 countries in the region: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates. Also in attendance were two representatives from the Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), as well as the co-Chair of the UN-GGIM and the United Nations Statistics Division /UN-GGIM Secretariat representative. A complete list of participants is presented in Annex II.

Opening

2. Vanessa Lawrence CB chaired the Meeting in her capacity of co-Chair of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). She noted that this event is in line with the UN-GGIM's mandate to promote cooperation and dialogue among countries and among countries and regional and international organizations, as well as the use of geospatial information in support of sustainable development.
3. His Excellency Morayyea Hassan Al Shahrani, President of the General Commission of Survey (GCS) and Chairman of the National Committee of GIS, Saudi Arabia, greeted the participants with a Welcoming speech underscoring that the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are proud to host this regional event. He thanked the participants for taking some time from their busy schedule to attend this important meeting and expressed his pleasure to see many Arab country representatives coming to Riyadh and sharing their experiences in geospatial information. He further outlined the current efforts of Saudi Arabia to develop geospatial data, products and services for the community of users. He then wished participants a successful deliberation.
4. Amor Laaribi, representative of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) Secretariat at the United Nations Statistics Division, opened the Meeting and welcomed all participants to this important event to discuss the formal establishment of an Arab chapter of the UN-GGIM initiative. He stressed that this

first official meeting of the Committee was aiming to discuss the organizational aspects for the formal establishment of the UN-GGIM for the Arab States, as the regional coordinating mechanism in geospatial information, in accordance with Decision 4/111 of the fourth session of United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)², held in New York in August 2014. He commended the General Commission for Survey for hosting and helping to organize the meeting and enabling country representatives from geospatial formation related fields – including statisticians and cartographers – to come and work together.

5. Awni Al Khasawneh, Director General of the Royal Jordanian Geographic Center, delivered opening remarks as the co-Coordinator of the Transitional Bureau of the Committee. He provided background information on the transitional process and reported to the participants about the activities carried out since the inception of the process three years ago in Qatar (February 2013), through Amman (February 2014) to New York (August 2014). He mentioned that we are transitioning from a temporary structure to a formal UN-GGIM:Arab States.

Overview of UN-GGIM

6. Vanessa Lawrence then gave a comprehensive overview on UN-GGIM, its importance globally and gave illustrations of some of its work. She stressed that the overall vision UN-GGIM share is to make accurate, reliable and authoritative geospatial information readily available to support national, regional and global development. Ms Lawrence summed it up when she said: “We all know that in order to tackle some of the greatest challenges we face as a society today – eradicating poverty, enhancing economic development to all but especially in transitional and developing countries, promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of areas – we need to understand more about our location. Fundamental to this, is increasing our understanding of place. In order to do this, and in order for those who are making the important decisions on how to address these issues, solid, reliable and accurate information is needed. A reliable and accurate geospatial information base is at the heart of this, and this Committee is driving the work to ensure that such an information base is developed and available right across the globe. Since UN-GGIM was first convened in 2011 we have established firm foundations. But the regional UN-GGIM structure now fully established in Asia Pacific, the Americas, Europe and now the Arab States region and near finalizing

² UN-GGIM convened its fourth session in New York, 6-8 August 2014, and adopted Decision 4/111, which “Congratulated the group of Arab States for their preparatory work towards a common work programme, endorsed the establishment of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Arab States, noting the transitional committee will continue to function in the foreseeable future, welcomed the announcement to hold the first meeting in early 2015, and invited the Regional Committee to report regularly to the Committee of Experts.” (for more details, please see the report of the Fourth Session E/2014/46-E/C.20/2014/15 at: http://ggim.un.org/ggim_committee.html).

establishment in Africa is vital for decision-makers globally to know where to turn to in their region for expert advice and thought-leadership on matters related to geospatial information and place-based decision-making. The regional structure and establishment of bodies like UN-GGIM: Arab States will help to realize the vision of UN-GGIM – “To make accurate, reliable and authoritative geospatial information readily available to support national, regional and global development.”

REVIEW OF MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 4TH SESSION OF UN-GGIM- SETTING THE CONTEXT

7. A Session was dedicated to review the important issues that were raised at the 4th session of UN-GGIM and of relevance to the work of UN-GGIM: Arab States. A country (national) perspective as well as a global one were presented. Saad Al-Hamlan, from Saudi Arabia, gave his comments on his participation in the 4th Session of UN-GGIM in New York in August 2014, and what captured his attention. He expressed his satisfaction with the information and the knowledge gained either from the three days of the main session or the side events he managed to attend. He encouraged other Arab country representatives to attend the upcoming sessions and share and learn from other experiences. At the same session, Amor Laaribi, UNSD/UN-GGIM Secretariat representative, explained the benefits pertaining to the global mechanism, and outlined the ECOSOC resolutions and subsequent decisions leading to the establishment of UN-GGIM (stressing that this is the 20th UN Committee, reflecting the importance of geospatial information at the global level). He also stressed the need for and genesis of a global/regional architecture, leading to the establishment of UN-GGIM for Arab states, through resolution 4/111, and providing an opportunity for the uptake of Arab issues at the global level where relevant and benefitting from the experiences of similar efforts in other regions.

NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

8. A Session has offered participating countries a forum to share their national practices and strategies on the use of geospatial information and the building of national geospatial infrastructures. Each country then had the opportunity to present how geospatial information is important within their own country and to provide illustrative examples. What is worth noting is that participants actively engaged in vivid discussions showing that the Member States are aware of the importance of geospatial information and the use of geospatial methodologies and technologies. All the countries are undertaking geospatial information activities, and are either building or developing their national geospatial information infrastructures. However, the level of implementation, development and maturity are variable. Indeed, Member States have applied geospatial information in a variety of areas ranging from digital mapping, census taking and atlases, urban systems, buildings and establishments, cadastre mapping and land information administration, etc.

9. The participating countries represented a wide spectrum of national experience in geospatial information as well as statistical activities. This variety of experiences enriched the discussions as countries were interested to learn from the experience of others. Countries showed their keen interest in the building of national geospatial infrastructures, and the use of geospatial information, particularly its integration with statistical information. However there are still some challenges, including on new technologies and reaching various categories of geospatial data users or potential users.

WORK PROGRAMME AND WORKING GROUPS

10. A session was dedicated to the work programme and the establishment of working groups. Participants were advised that the geospatial information issues to be addressed by the Committee, which in fact constitute the work programme of the Committee, should be identified among the major GGIM issues that are relevant to the countries in the region. Following intense discussions, it was decided that four Working Groups would be established and countries elected themselves to join the initial Working Groups but it was agreed others may choose to join later. The leaders of the Working Groups will be nominated at the next meeting of the Committee and the Working Groups that have been set for 10th-11th June in Algeria.

11. The Working Groups were as follows:

- **WG1: Institutional Arrangements, Legal and Policy Issues, Awareness and Capacity Building.** Countries initially wishing to be involved: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, KSA, Tunisia and UAE.
- **WG2: Fundamental Data and Geo-Standards.** Countries initially wishing to be involved: Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, KSA, UAE, Tunisia and GCC-Stat.
- **WG3: Geodetic Reference Frame.** Countries initially wishing to be involved: Algeria, Bahrain, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, KSA, Tunisia, UAE and Jordan.
- **WG4: Integration of Geospatial & Statistical Information.** Countries initially wishing to be involved: Algeria, Egypt, Oman, Qatar, KSA, Tunisia, UAE, Bahrain and GCC-Stat.

FUNCTIONS, MANDATE, STATUES

12. At the first session of the second day, which in fact dealt with the main issue to be addressed by the meeting, examined and discussed the guiding principles of the mission and functions of the Committee under formation, its statutes and what would be the major issues the

Committee should address in the incoming years. In this regard, the meeting was provided with information about the existing statutes of similar regional committees. After discussion, agreement was reached about the constitution of a Bureau (Executive Committee) composed of a Chair and two Vice-Chairs. It was agreed that rules of procedure will be defined and adopted in the next meetings of the Committee.

13. Elections were held in the middle of the second day for the roles of Chair and Vice-Chairs of UN-GGIM: Arab States to lead the Executive Bureau. The Region appointed Saudi Arabia to be elected as their Chair and Algeria and Jordan to be Vice-Chairs. The General Commission for Survey of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has accepted the proposal to assure the Secretariat of the Committee. Following the elections, His Excellency Morayyea Hassan Al Shahrani kindly took over the role of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.
14. HE Morayyea Hassan Al Shahrani, the inaugural Chair of UN-GGIM: Arab States on behalf of Saudi Arabia said: “Saudi Arabia is very honored and proud to be elected as the first Chair of UN-GGIM: Arab States and we will do our best to fulfil this role with the care and attention required, to ensure we liaise with colleagues throughout the region. We look forward to working with our colleagues in UN-GGIM: Americas, UN-GGIM: Asia Pacific, UN-GGIM: Europe and the transitional team from Africa. Saudi Arabia truly believes that accurate, reliable, authoritative geospatial information is important to the region and to the globe. We know that accurate geospatial information already assists better decision-making in infrastructure and construction planning, water management, food supply, agricultural planning and sustainable energy”. He stressed that we should collectively build the UN-GGIM: Arab States we want, based on what has been achieved so far. He also underscored how critical it is in today’s world to link geospatial information and statistics.
15. A further meeting of UN-GGIM: Arab States is scheduled in New York during the Fifth Session of UN-GGIM in August 2015 (3rd-7th August 2015). Participants were informed that a formal report of the inaugural UN-GGIM: Arab States meeting will be available from the UN-GGIM Secretariat at a later date.

CLOSING

16. HE Morayyea Hassan Al Shahrani, the inaugural Chair of UN-GGIM: Arab States, thanked all participants and resource persons for their valuable contributions. He also reiterated his country’s commitment to continue assisting the Arab Member States in building the regional committee and in carrying out its work. He was pleased with the interactive discussions and the proposed set of recommendations made by the participants to improve geospatial information development at national and regional levels, as well as with the friendly atmosphere which prevailed for the setting of the nascent regional Committee. He wished to continue to work with them and look forward to seeing all of them and their colleagues at the Second meeting UN-GGIM: Arab States to be held in Algeria, from 10rd -11th June 2015.

He concluded by saying: Finally, I should like to thank Vanessa Lawrence and Amor Laaribi for helping us organize this inaugural meeting.

17. Vanessa Lawrence, UN-GGIM co-Chair, expressed her pleasure to be chairing the meeting, as she knows quite well the region. She thanked the participants and the organizing team for their tireless efforts throughout the meeting which contribute to its success. She also reiterated her commitment to providing her support for the building process of the UN-GGIM for the Arab States, and encouraged Arab Member States to participate in and contribute to the work of the UN Committee of Experts on GGIM. She concluded her remarks by extending her gratitude to HE Al-Shahrani, President of the General Commission for Survey (GCS) and Chair-Elect of the Committee and his assistant, Saad Al-Hamlan, for their engagement to organize this meeting and wished all the success for the work of the Secretariat to be assured by GCS.
18. Amor Laaribi, UNSD representative, then made concluding remarks, expressing his appreciation to participants for their active participation, and to Saad Al-Hamlan and his team for hosting the Meeting and providing efficient support throughout the meeting as well as for their outstanding hospitality. He also thanked HE Al-Shahrani, and Ms Lawrence, the co-Chair of UN-GGIM, for the help they provided in facilitating the work of the meeting. He hoped that the set of arrangements just adopted would be a useful guide for participants and their colleagues to further participate in future geospatial information related activities. He wished to continue to work with them and look forward to seeing all of them and their colleagues at the UN-GGIM events to be held in New York, from 3rd -7th August 2015. He then declared the Meeting closed.

ANNEXES

Annex I. Agenda of the Workshop

Annex II. List of participants

ANNEX I. AGENDA OF THE MEETING

First Meeting of the UN-GGIM for the Arab States Riyadh, 24 – 25 Feb. 2015

Provisional Agenda

Tuesday 24 February

Chair : Ms Vanessa Lawrence, Co-Chair UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)

Welcome; Overview of UN-GGIM globally and the outcomes of UN-GGIM4 meeting; Country Reports and discussion on a possible work programme for UN-GGIM: Arab States

	Item	Topic	Presenter
09.00-09.30		Registration and refreshments	
09.30	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opening- Welcome Speeches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chair- HE Morayyea Hassan Al Shahrani General Commission for Survey (GCS) President, Chairman of the National Committee of GIS, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia- Amor Laaribi, UN Statistics Division/UN-GGIM Secretariat.- Awni Khaswanah, Co-Coordinator (Geospatial community).- Sabir Harbi, GCCStat, Co-Coordinator (Statistical community)
	2	Adoption of Agenda and appointment of Rapporteur	Chair
10.15	3	Overview of UN-GGIM: its formation and its work	Vanessa Lawrence UN-GGIM Co-Chair
11.00		Coffee break and photograph	

11.30	4	- Country's perspective on 4 th session of UN-GGIM - Review of matters arising from the 4 th session of UN-GGIM- Setting the context	- Saad Al-Hamlan, GCS (SA) - Amor Laaribi UNSD/UN-GGIM Secretariat
13.00	Lunch		
14.00	5	Country Experiences	Presentations by countries
15.30	Coffee Break		
16.00- 17:00	6	Discussion of the Work Programme/Working Groups – Based on UN-GGIM Inventory of Issues	Chair
18:00	Evening Event: Visit to King Abdulaziz Historical Center (https://plus.google.com/108784727110616716479/about?gl=sa&hl=en) and Dinner		

Wednesday 25 February

Chair until elections completed: Ms Vanessa Lawrence, Co-Chair UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)

Chair after elections completed: Newly elected Chair of UN-GGIM Arab States Executive Committee

Formation of UN-GGIM: Arab States Executive Committee; the Secretariat and the acceptance of the Work Plan for UN-GGIM Arab States

9.00	7	Approval of Rules of Procedure/ General procedure regarding voting in of officers Candidates for Election to the Executive Committee	UNSD/UN-GGIM Secretariat
9.30	8	Election of Executive Committee Chair and Vice Chair	UNSD/UN-GGIM Secretariat
10.00	9	Election of Executive Committee members/Working Groups	UNSD/UN-GGIM Secretariat

10.30	10	Handover of Chair	
10.30	Coffee break and photograph		
11.00	11	Proposal for the role of Secretariat	UN-GGIM-Arab States Chair
11.15	12	Proposals for a Work Plan	Chair
11.30	13	Discussion and acceptance of the proposed Work Plan	Chair
12.30	Lunch		
13.30	14	Proposals for Working Groups/ Discussion and acceptance of the proposed Working Groups	Chair
14.45	15	Next meeting of UN-GGIM: Arab States Next meeting of UN-GGIM New York 2 nd -7 th August 2015	Chair Vanessa Lawrence
15.15	16	Conclusions/Closing Remarks	Chair
16.00	Closing		

ANNEX II. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

UN-GGIM for the Arab States Meeting

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 24-25 February 2015

List of participants

	I. Countries	Names of Participants	Organization
1	Algeria	Mr. Naceur Omrane	CNIG <i>Technical Director</i>
		Mr. Taoufik Aouameur	INCT <i>Director</i>
2	Bahrain	- Mr. Naji Sabt Salem Sabt	Survey and Land Registration Bureau. <i>(General Director of Survey)</i>
		- Mr. Waheed Ahmed Albastaki	<i>(Director of Topographic Survey Directorate)</i>
3	Egypt	Ms Nahla Saleh	CAPMAS <i>(GIS Director)</i>
4	Jordan	- Mr. Awni Al Khaswaneh	Royal Jordanian Geographic Center <i>(Director General)</i>
		- Mr. Mahmoud Malkawi	<i>(Technical Advisor)</i>

		- Mr. Tayseer Darweesh	<i>Applications Director)</i>
5	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	<p>- H.E. Morayyea H. A. AlShahrani</p> <p>- Dr. Saad Mohamed A. Alhamlan</p> <p>- Dr. Bandar Saleh A. Almuslmani</p> <p>- Eng. Ahmad Yahya M Al-Neami</p> <p>- Mr. Mohammed M. AlShahrani</p> <p>-----</p> <p>- Dr. Mohammed Nasser Al-Rajhi</p> <p>-Eng. Abdullah Masoud Al-doshan</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-Mr. Abdullah Mohammed Al-Hamlan</p> <p>-----</p> <p>- Colonel.Majid Hamid Khammash</p>	<p>General Commission for Survey (GCS)</p> <p><i>(President)</i></p> <p><i>(General Manager of Geospatial Information Center)</i></p> <p><i>(General Manager of Geodesy and Land Survey)</i></p> <p><i>(Manager of Geospatial Databases)</i></p> <p><i>(Manager of Business Services)</i></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs</p> <p><i>(Assistant Undersecretary for Survey and Lands)</i></p> <p><i>(Manager of Maps Production Management)</i></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ministry of Economy and Planning</p> <p><i>(Manager of Unit Maps)</i></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ministry of Defense (General Directorate of Military Survey)</p>

			<i>(Manager of Geospatial Services Management)</i>
6	Lebanon	Mr. Sarkis Fadous	Arab Union of Surveys <i>(President)</i>
7	Morocco	- Mr. Tarek Laghzil - Ms Nabila Licer	Agence Nationale de la Conservation Foncière, de Cadastre et de la Cartographie (ANCFCC) <i>(Head of Geodesy Section)</i> <i>Head of Cartography Section)</i>
8	Oman	- Mr. Sulaiman Al-Zadjali - Mr. Sameh Al-Araimi - Mr. Zahir Al-Mahrooqi	National Center for Statistics and Information
		- Mr. Rabea Sulaiman Alaghbari - Mr. Mahfoodh Al-Araimi	National Survey Authority
9	Qatar	Mr. Mohamed Al Miri	GIS Centre <i>(Head of Department)</i>
10	Tunisia	Mr. Ahmed Adouni	Office of Topography and Cadastre <i>(President-Director General)</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Adel Jehane - Mr. Hamed Rahmouni 	<p>National Center for Remote Sensing and Cartography <i>(Director General)</i></p> <p><i>(Administrative Director)</i></p>
11	United Arab Emirates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Saleh Al-Hubail - Mr. Abdulwahab Al-Bustani 	Military Survey
		Mr. Khaled Al-Mlmeihi	<p>Mapping & Survey Services Cie</p> <p><i>(Executive Director)</i></p>
	II. Regional and International Organizations		
12	<p>Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Fahad Senan - Ms. Suad Al-Izki 	<p>GCC-Stat</p> <p><i>(Head of GIS Section)</i></p> <p><i>(Head of Data Collection and Dissemination Section)</i></p>
13	UN-GGIM (Co-Chair)	Ms Vanessa Lawrence CB	United Kingdom
14	UNSD/UN-GGIM Secretariat	Mr. Amor Laaribi	United Nations Statistics Division/DESA (GGIM Coordinator)
		Total: 36	

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