

UNECE Session 11.30-13.00

The question of the session is “What could ECE do to advance the data revolution and ensure adequate measurement, monitoring and participation for sustainable development?”

And to Vanessa particularly:

What could ECE and its Member States do to advance the work on using new data sources through the integration of geospatial information?

What is the importance of geospatial information in advancing the data revolution?

Ambassador, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

Geospatial information and the use of geospatial data has been both evolving since mapping became digital and GIS became mainstream in the 1980-90s and it is now very much part of the Big Data agenda.

It is surprising to many of us that the use of geospatial analysis has not been seen in the UN as fundamental to all analysis work, until the last five years.

If one thinks of the concept ‘Everything happens somewhere’...then one can immediately understand that all information collected – well at least - as I know there are statisticians in the audience – over 97% of all information has a location element to it. The information has ‘place’ and place-based information attached to it’.

What is the advantage of this...well governments around the world are using place-based information otherwise known as ‘geospatial information’ in computer systems...often known as a GIS..(a geographical information system) to perform analysis to provide substantial financial savings or change outcomes.

Good examples are as we have had a transport theme ...school transport in so many countries is planned using GIS. In one small town in the UK by using GIS to rearrange the routing of school busses to two schools, a saving of 300,000 Euros has been made - and the analysis took only half a day.

It is used universally in the private sector to calculate insurance, to optimize waste transport to optimize workforces and millions of Euros are saved and services improved using it.

The UN recognized the importance of global geospatial information at the 47th plenary in July 2011 and under the auspices of ECOSOC established the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) ...why...as they recognized that: 'There was a significant gap in the management of geospatial information globally and the work of the geospatial information community was vital to work alongside other parts of the UN to assist the analysis capability.

We now have 160 nations involved actively in UN-GGIM and are now approaching the 5th meeting of the Committee this August.

The work on the 'data revolution' we see as exciting and vital. Geospatial data has already had its "own data revolution" and is mature enough – coherent and relevant – to further enhance the work that is now on-going on 'the data revolution'.

The use of geospatial data or simply put location data makes sense of big, complex datasets, helps identify patterns in human and natural processes, provides the framework for measuring, monitoring and achieving the SDGs, and assists everyone to make better decisions.

It is able to provide accurately geocoded and location-based data which is available in machine readable, standardised, and open formats.

It can contribute to sustainable development at all stages – from providing an evidence base from which to make suitable policies, to implementing them, and then measuring and monitoring the outcomes over time.

As a result of this, UN-GGIM can play a critical role in supporting both the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the data revolution, both now and in the future.

UN-GGIM has been concentrating on integrating location and geography in all policy making and delivery – not just during the measuring and monitoring phases of projects.

I hope I have already answered your question on What is the importance of geospatial information in advancing the data revolution?

May I now turn to what can UNECE and its Member States do to advance the work on using new data sources through the integration of geospatial information? Well my short answer is assist in the institutional arrangements.

Around the World UN-GGIM has set up very successful regional bodies in Asia Pacific, in the Americas, in the Arab World and also in Africa.

In Europe due to historical issues, the setting up of UN-GGIM: Europe has taken longer and it has now been established thanks to assistance from EuroStat and also Eurogeographics, which is a club for heads of national mapping authorities.

We know that the use of geospatial information at the UNECE could be so beneficial for many ECE programmes - not only for statistics for also to just state a few - forestry, housing and land management, transport, environment and of course work related to extreme events and natural disasters.

But as we all know, ECE is much larger than EU – and so we do need to move UN-GGIM: Europe to be firmly anchored within the work at UNECE...that is our ask.

UNECE has the established mechanisms with the United Nations Department of Economic Affairs (DESA) and with UN Statistical Department with whom main UN-GGIM already works closely. We hope in the future UNECE will provide the secretariat to the global work on UN-GGIM:Europe as is happening in Asia Pacific, Africa and the Americas.

We know that UNECE will benefit from such a close association with UN-GGIM: Europe as the use of geospatial information – which is now recognized as a new source of data in support of statistical information – plays its part in advancing the work of data

revolution and in the setting of the evidence base for policy making and the measuring and monitoring of the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you