

**United Nations Committee of Experts on  
Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)  
Subcommittee on Geodesy (Subcommittee)  
Terms of Reference**

**Preamble**

The Global Geodetic Reference Frame (GGRF) is the foundation for the collection and management of nationally integrated geospatial information and is used to measure and monitor our dynamic Earth. It is relied upon for social, environmental and economic initiatives, Earth science, the measuring and monitoring of progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other global development agendas.

Recognizing the growing need for a high quality and sustainable GGRF to support good decision-making to an ever-increasing location-based society, with inclusive social progress, environmental sustainability and economic development, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution [69/266](#) in February 2015, entitled ‘A Global Geodetic Reference Frame for Sustainable Development’. The General Assembly specifically invited Member States to commit to improving and maintaining appropriate national geodetic infrastructure as an essential means to enhance the GGRF, and to engage in multilateral cooperation that addresses infrastructure gaps and duplications towards the development of a more sustainable GGRF.

To strengthen its effort in developing and sustaining the GGRF, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), in its decision [7/103](#) in August 2017, endorsed the formal establishment and composition of the Subcommittee on Geodesy (Subcommittee), replacing the Working Group on the Global Geodetic Reference Frame (GGRF).

At its ninth session in August 2019, UN-GGIM, in adopting decision [9/104](#), requested that its Subcommittee on Geodesy explore a number of modalities to balance the longer-term vision, stability and operational requirements of the GGRF, including the establishment of a global geodetic centre (UN-GGCE) of excellence in cooperation with UN-GGIM.

At its tenth session in August 2020, UN-GGIM, in adopting decision [10/104](#), welcomed and supported the offer from the Federal Republic of Germany to host a UN-GGCE at the United Nations Campus in Bonn, Germany, as the first UN-GGCE of an envisioned federated approach to enhance global cooperation and coordination across Member States and relevant geodetic stakeholders, strengthen geodetic infrastructure, as well as support Member States in improving their national contributions to the global geodetic infrastructure.

At its eleventh session in August 2021, UN-GGIM, in adopting decision [11/104](#), endorsed two strategic papers presented by the Subcommittee; a [Position Paper on Sustaining the Global Geodetic Reference Frame](#), and a [Concept Paper on the Establishment of a Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence](#). The Position Paper provides a strategy and action plan to help achieve the long-term sustainability, accessibility, and quality of the GGRF. The Concept Paper includes a strategic plan providing a broad direction for the UN-GGCE and addresses many of the critical gaps in capacity and capability across the five focus areas described in the draft Position Paper. UN-GGIM also noted the Subcommittee’s desire to review its working modalities, including its terms of reference and structure to align with the future working arrangements outlined in the Position Paper and the Concept Paper.

In adopting resolution 2022/24 entitled ‘Enhancing global geospatial information management arrangements’ on 22 July 2022, ECOSOC recognized the sustained efforts of UN-GGIM to establish the

United Nations Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre (UN-GGKIC) in Deqing, China, and the UN-GGCE at the United Nations campus in Bonn, Germany, each of which will, in an open, inclusive, participatory and transparent manner, provide opportunities to develop and expand global geospatial capacity, competence and capability, and to strengthen geospatial information management arrangements in countries, especially developing countries.

Further, in making decision 12/101 at its twelfth session in August 2022, UN-GGIM “noted the progress and efforts to finalize the modalities for the establishment of the UN-GGKIC in Deqing, China, and the UN-GGCE in Bonn, Germany, and appreciated the involvement of the International Advisory Committees (IAC) throughout the setup process and encouraged them to remain engaged and to regularly share progress with UN-GGIM as the Centre’s operationalize their activities.”

These updated Terms of Reference aim to focus the Subcommittee’s efforts to implement resolution [69/266](#), address recent decisions and guidance from UN-GGIM, support the UN-GGCE, and to ensure an even more efficient and relevant Subcommittee with active participation from developing countries, including in the Subcommittee’s working groups.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **1. Objectives**

- 1.1. Implement United Nations General Assembly resolution [69/266](#), entitled ‘A Global Geodetic Reference Frame for Sustainable Development’ through coordination and collaboration between Member States and Partners<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2. Assist and guide the UN-GGCE in the development of its work plan and provide access to scientific and operational expertise.

### **2. Functions**

- 2.1. Develop strategies, implementation plans, policies, and guidelines to help achieve the long-term sustainability, accessibility and quality of the GGRF.
- 2.2. Drive action and maximise the benefit of ongoing efforts to sustain and enhance the GGRF.
- 2.3. Actively participate in the International Advisory Committee (IAC) of the UN-GGCE to assist the UN-GGCE in developing and implementing its strategy and work plan.
- 2.4. Support UN-GGIM in ensuring the GGRF is more visible and understandable to society by raising awareness and highlighting the importance of global geodesy and the GGRF for sustainable development and the wellbeing of people, planet and prosperity.
- 2.5. Encourage Member States and Partners to enhance cooperation in providing assistance, especially in developing countries, to ensure Member States have the capacity and capability to realize the benefits from geodesy and the GGRF.

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<sup>1</sup> Partners include all entities, groups and organisations who are ready and able to support and contribute to the work of the Subcommittee, and who are not Member States. This may include, but not limited to, the UN-GGCE, thematic groups, international organisations (e.g., International Association of Geodesy (IAG), the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO), Group on Earth Observations (GEO), etc.), the private sector, funding bodies, space agencies, academic and research institutions.

### **3. Governance**

- 3.1. The Subcommittee shall work under the auspices of, and report directly to, UN-GGIM on at least an annual basis.
- 3.2. UN-GGIM will review the work of the Subcommittee as appropriate, provide its guidance and views, and may revise these Terms of Reference based on the work the Subcommittee has completed and any new items that UN-GGIM would like the Subcommittee to consider.

### **4. Membership, composition and terms of office**

#### **4.1. Membership and decision making**

- 4.1.1. The membership of the Subcommittee shall comprise geodetic expert representatives from Member States and Partners.
- 4.1.2. Member State representatives shall be from national geospatial information entities [preferably having responsibility for national geodetic programs and infrastructure] as nominated by the Bureau of each of the five UN-GGIM regional committees.
- 4.1.3. The UN-GGIM regional committees will ensure appropriate expertise and balance between developed and developing countries and with due consideration given to countries in special situations<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.1.4. Regional membership composition of the Subcommittee shall include: Africa (up to 9 members); Americas (up to 8 members); Arab States (up to 6 members); Asia-Pacific (up to 10 members) and Europe (up to 9 members)<sup>3</sup>. The maximum membership of the Subcommittee will comprise 42 Member States.
- 4.1.5. Member State geodetic expert representatives should liaise with, and report back to, their respective UN-GGIM regional committees on a regular basis, and at least annually.
- 4.1.6. Partners can join the Subcommittee at the invitation of the Subcommittee.
- 4.1.7. The Subcommittee will aim to make decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the Subcommittee will make decisions by voting (see Section 4.2). In these cases, only Member State representatives can vote.
- 4.1.8. Subcommittee representatives are strongly encouraged to join a Subcommittee working group (see Section 4.7).

#### **4.2. Voting**

- 4.2.1. For the purpose of the present rules, the phrase “representatives present and voting” means representatives casting an affirmative or negative vote.
- 4.2.2. Each Member State participating in the session shall have one vote, and the decisions shall be made by a simple majority of the representatives present and voting at the session.
- 4.2.3. Only Member State representatives can vote in elections.

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<sup>2</sup> The group of countries in special situation is comprised of least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS).

<sup>3</sup> The number of Member States is proportional to the regional membership of UN-GGIM. For example, the Asia-Pacific Regional Committee has more Member States than the Arab States Regional Committee.

#### 4.3. Observers

- 4.3.1. The Subcommittee welcomes observers from Member States and Partners to Subcommittee meetings and events to contribute their expertise and experience.
- 4.3.2. Observers are those not explicitly designated as representatives by Member States or Partners.
- 4.3.3. The status of observers is not permanent.

#### 4.4. Co-Chairs

- 4.4.1. The Subcommittee shall elect two (2) co-Chairs to serve for 4-year periods from among its Member State members with consideration for geographic diversity and equity between developed and developing countries.
- 4.4.2. Co-Chair elections will occur biennially, such that one new co-Chair is elected every two years in order to ensure continuity.
- 4.4.3. A co-Chair may serve no more than two consecutive 4-year periods.
- 4.4.4. The co-Chair positions are held by an individual, not by a Member State. In the event of a co-Chair resigning, the Subcommittee will elect a new co-Chair for the balance of the 4-year period.

#### 4.5. Bureau

- 4.5.1. The role of the Subcommittee Bureau shall be to lead and guide the Subcommittee, including to assist in meeting its Objectives (Section 1) and performing its Functions (Section 2).
- 4.5.2. The membership of the Bureau shall include; the two co-Chairs, the Chairs of Subcommittee working groups and four additional Member State members elected from within the Subcommittee.
- 4.5.3. Of the elected members, two shall be elected every two years to serve for a 4-year period. This ensures two Bureau members are elected every two years in order to provide continuity.
- 4.5.4. Of the elected members, the Subcommittee will aim to have at least one representative from each of the five regional committees and consider equity between developed and developing countries.
- 4.5.5. The Bureau positions are held by an individual, not by a Member State. In the event of a Bureau member resigning, the position will remain vacant until the Subcommittee elects a new member.
- 4.5.6. Members of the Bureau should liaise with, and report back to, UN-GGIM regional committees on a regular basis on matters related to geodesy and the GGRF.

#### 4.6. Member/s to the UN-GGCE's International Advisory Committee

- 4.6.1. As and when requested, the Subcommittee shall nominate member/s to join the UN-GGCE's International Advisory Committee (IAC). The nominee/s shall be from Subcommittee members and will comprise expert/s with demonstrated experience in the operation, maintenance, management and/or development of arrangements in the field of national, regional or global geodesy or global geospatial information, and being willing and able to contribute to advance and support the key priorities of the UN-GGCE.

- 4.6.2. Member/s to the IAC will be elected for two years with an option for re-election for a further two years based on demonstrated participation and contribution.
- 4.6.3. In the event a member to the IAC resigns, a substitute will serve as a member of the IAC until the Subcommittee has elected a new member for the remaining period of the two-year term. This new member is also eligible for re-nomination.
- 4.6.4. Subcommittee member/s of the IAC will provide the conduit between the UN-GGCE and the Subcommittee and communicate closely with the Bureau to ensure transparency and facilitate coordination and cooperation between the two bodies.

#### 4.7. Working Groups

- 4.7.1. The Subcommittee may establish working groups to address specific issues related to its work programme. The Subcommittee may also dissolve working groups as it sees fit.
- 4.7.2. All working groups will have a defined work plan, deliverables and milestones.
- 4.7.3. The Chair of a working group shall be elected by members of the working group.
- 4.7.4. Working group members should be members of the Subcommittee.

### **5. Secretariat**

- 5.1. The United Nations Global Geospatial Information Section, Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs shall serve as the permanent Secretariat of the Subcommittee.

### **6. Meetings**

- 6.1. The Subcommittee will normally have one plenary meeting at least annually at a time and place convenient to the members.
- 6.2. The Bureau and working groups will arrange meetings as required.
- 6.3. Meetings shall be announced to the Subcommittee with reasonable notice. Minutes of meetings shall be provided to the Subcommittee within reasonable time after the meeting.

### **7. Meeting documentation**

- 7.1. Meeting documentation will include an agenda, the meeting minutes from the previous meeting, thematic notes prepared by the working groups, notes by the Secretariat and other relevant documents prepared by external experts or expert groups.

### **8. Reporting**

- 8.1. The co-Chairs, with support from the Bureau, shall coordinate, monitor and report on the activities of the Subcommittee and any working groups, to UN-GGIM and its regional committees.
- 8.2. The Subcommittee shall formally report on progress of the Subcommittee to the annual sessions of UN-GGIM, through the preparation of written reports and background documents, under the standing agenda item 'Global Geodetic Reference Frame'.

### **9. Review of Terms of Reference**

- 9.1. The Subcommittee may review these current Terms of Reference as the need arises, to ensure that the Subcommittee carries out its functions efficiently and effectively based on its mandate.

*January 2023*