



Distribution: LIMITED

E/ECA/DISD/CODI.3/7

27 March 2003

**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**Original: English**

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Third Meeting of the Committee  
on Development Information (CODI)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
10 – 17 May 2003

**Sub-committee on Geoinformation: Progress report**

**ECA's follow-up report**



**REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC FOR AFRICA TO THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GEOINFORMATION OF THE THRID MEETING OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION (CODI.3)**

Addis Ababa, 10-17 May 2003

1. The secretariat is pleased to report on actions taken on follow up activities of resolutions adopted by CODI.2 and other activities deemed of interest to member States in the field of Geoinformation. It also reports on ECA's future programme of work.
2. The report is divided in two major parts: (i) ECA activities and (ii) synthesis of country reports.

**ECA ACTIVITIES**

3. The implementation of the work programme was to a great extent geared to promote and facilitate the realization of the major issues recommended of CODI.2. The activities focussed on three fronts: (i) capacity-building in modern Geoinformation resources management and applications, in particular NSDIs; (ii) policy advocacy for geo-spatial information; and (iii) developing an in-house facility that would make possible the search and discovery of spatial data collections on Africa for use by all researchers and decision-makers, and that would provide member States with means to publicize their spatial data holdings. It has further fortified its partnership and networking with international, regional and national initiatives and institutions involved in the advancement of GI in Africa.
4. Modalities of implementation were conducted through conferences, seminars and workshops; studies on policy and technical matters; information dissemination; advisory services; and international cooperation and partnership.

Capacity building and advisory services seminars and workshops

5. The secretariat co-organized, supported and participated in various seminars and workshops, in different capacities. Worth quoting are:
  - Sponsored and provided technical support to the “International Conference on Spatial Information for Sustainable Development held at the Kenya School of Monetary Studies in Nairobi, Kenya, 2-5 October 2001, jointly with the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), HABITAT, UNEP and the Association of Surveyors of Kenya. It co-organized a workshop on Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs): Technical and Institutional Components, replicating the workshop held during CODI.2.
  - Supported technically the “AfricaGIS-2001 International Conference”, organized in Nairobi from 5 to 9 November 2001, at the headquarters on UN Office at Nairobi, with the theme “Enhancing Socio-Economic Development with Geo-Spatial Knowledge”. It co-organized a workshop on Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs) for participants from Eastern Africa.

- Participated as resource person to a sub-regional workshop on “Spatial Data Infrastructures and Spatial Data Access Policy”, Asmara, Eritrea, from 2-10 April 2002, organized in connection with Africover national officer’s meeting.
- The secretariat co-organized – jointly with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) – and hosted from 1 to 5 July 2002 a United Nations Regional Workshop on the Use of Space Technology for Disaster Management for Africa. It. The workshop was co-sponsored by The Committee on Earth Observation Satellites – CEOS, the European Space Agency, and Space Imaging Co. The regional workshop was attended by 120 participants from 44 African countries, representing a wide range of expertise and institutional settings: National officers responsible for providing disaster management support, university researchers and professors, space agencies, space technology users, civil defence experts, NGOs, UN agencies and private industry.
- As a resource person in the fourth UN/USA Regional workshop on the use of Global Navigation Systems, Lusaka, Zambia, 17-19 June 2002.
- As a resource person at the Global Mapping Seminar in Nairobi organized by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan and the Steering Committee for Global Mapping with the cooperation of RCMRD, Nairobi, Kenya, 19 to 23 August 2002
- Collaborated with International Institute for Geoinformation Science and Earth Observation (ITC) and the University of Natal in organizing a workshop on Geospatial Data Infrastructures in Southern Africa, as part of ITC’s rolling refresher course around Africa for middle to senior management government officials. Durban, South Africa, 21 Oct– 2 Nov 2002.
- Participated in the workshop on the implementation of a Unified African Geodetic Reference Framework (AFREF), organized by the government of Namibia from 6-8 December 2002. The workshop produced a “Windhoek Declaration” and recommended, among other things, that the declaration be tabled at CODI.3 for adoption.
- At the request of the Ethiopian Mapping Authority, ECA jointly organized a sensitization workshop on NSDI in Addis Ababa in October 2002, to coincide with and take advantage of, the visit to Ethiopia of an expert on clearinghouse and metadata systems. ECA’s contribution to the workshop included a resource person, stationery and printing of the papers presented.
- The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigerian, through the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) requested ECA to review proposals it had received for an Integrated Resource Management and National Geographic Information System (IRM/NAGIS). ECA reviewed the projects documents and made appropriate recommendations. The advisory service also included planning of a stakeholders’ workshop on NGDI, which was held in February 2003.
- ECA, jointly with UNEP, ESRI, GSDI and the Survey of Kenya organized a national SDI workshop for Kenya in 2001. The workshop, which was conducted at the conclusion of AfricaGIS 2001, took advantage of the international experts in Kenya for AfricaGIS and contributed in no small measure towards the advancement of the concept of NSDI in Kenya.

- On the invitation of the Government of Botswana, ECA participated in the workshop to launch the steering committee on NSDI and the digital Atlas in Ethiopia.

### International cooperation and liaison

6. Coordination and cooperation with and other UN bodies and specialized agencies, with international and regional associations and programmes, and with development partners, are important vehicles for pooling financial and technical resources in support of Africa's development. In this context, ECA liaised with and supported a number of relevant initiatives valuable to Geoinformation advancement in the continent.

7. It is an active member of the UN Geographic Information Working Group (UNGWIG), whose main objective is to establish a UN geographic database to support the operations of the UN at various levels. This database would also serve the development of the African geo-spatial database recommended by CODI.2. One of the projects under this database initiative is the creation of digital datasets of the Second Order Administrative Boundaries (SALB) and ECA has the task of editing and harmonizing those of African countries.

8. The Commission has accorded great importance to the Inter-agency annual meetings on Outer Space Activities<sup>1</sup>, to which it always reported and participated. Its participation in 2002 was instrumental for the joint organization of the UN Regional workshop on space-based technologies, mentioned earlier.

9. ECA was invited to the meeting of the Committee on the Geographic Foundations for Agenda 21, US National Academy of Science (Washington, Jan 2002)) to discuss the use of geographical information for sustainable development in Africa. The final document was entitled "Down to Earth: Geographic Information for sustainable development in Africa".

10. The Commission also participated at the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association (GSDI), held in Budapest from 16 to 20 September 2002. GSDI has been a solid partner of ECA in its efforts to develop SDIs in Africa. It had the opportunity to present its activities in the field and discuss with partners and leading SDI experts and actors the problems, opportunities and solutions of SDI implementation.

11. ECA also became an active member of the African Environmental Information Network (AEIN) under the purview of UNEP. Its main objective is to establish the essential data foundation and information management framework needed to support country-level integrated environmental assessments and reporting. The Commission participated in the two stakeholders forums (2002 and 2003), where it was made clear that AEIN possesses close similarities to NSDIs and RSDIs and care should be taken to build close links and synergies between AEIN and existing information structures and networks.

---

<sup>1</sup> The ACCs meetings on Outer Space Activities are convened by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in Vienna. Two important items are "in-depth review of the cooperation of the United Nations organizations in remote sensing and related GIS activities", and "discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of the UN organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes"

12. During the period under purview, the secretariat continued to liaise with the Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys (RECTAS) and Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), as well as with the African Organization for Cartography and Remote Sensing (AOCRS), to mutually support activities of common interest and explore new ways of cooperation.

#### Studies, technical papers, publications

13. The secretariat is engaged in compiling an African SDI implementation guide as a major step in responding to the recommendations of CODI.2 and of other regional and sub regional forums which have made appeal for the establishment of national spatial data infrastructures. This publication is a cooperative effort of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association (GSDI) and EIS-Africa, with the collaboration of the International Institute for Geoinformation Science and Earth Observation (ITC). It is targeted to all those that have a key role to play in promoting, adopting, developing or implementing spatial information infrastructure in their home countries. These include administrators and managers of topographic and resource mapping departments and agencies, legislators and policy-makers, and major users of Geoinformation products.

14. The draft chapters, nine in total, have been finalized by a select group of specialists from Africa and abroad, possessing a wide knowledge and experience in advancing GI development at national, regional and international levels. The editors wish to express their appreciation to them for their valuable and enthusiastic cooperation. These draft chapters were reviewed by an ad-hoc group of experts who met during the first week of February 2003. The first version of document, will be presented and launch at this meeting.

15. The guide will be compiled as a living document, to be published in both French and English through the web, in the form of a book and on CD-ROM.

#### Databases and technical material for outside users

16. With the financial support of the Government of Korea, the Development Information Services Division is setting up a standard-based Geo-information clearinghouse gateway, with the main objective to deliver geoinformation tools, techniques and products to member States. The project will facilitate the search and discovery of spatial data collections on Africa, including those held outside Africa, for use by all researchers and decision-makers working on issues related to the continent.

17. The project offers the following direct benefits to member States: (i) enables them to publicize their data holdings through ECA's clearing house node; (ii) provides "country spaces" on ECA's server for countries that do not have the capability to serve their metadata collections. While ECA will provide general maintenance, the country will own and administer their metadata as a separate database; (iii) provides advice and training on metadata tools and clearinghouse services, (iv) assist in organizing training and awareness workshops at regional, sub-regional and national levels; and (v) provides easy access to catalogues of data on Africa. ECA worked closely with the implementers of the Ethiopian Natural Resources and Environmental Meta-Database (ENRAEMED) during the development of the metadata software and has reached an agreement with the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to host the meta-database, under the country space programme.

18. All member States that are interested in benefiting from this project are invited to get in touch with the Development Information Services Division, Geoinformation Team.

Future activities for the years 2003, 2004 and 2005

19. While efforts have been focussing on awareness raising, policy formulation and capacity building, the next years, particularly the biennium 2004-2005, will be more action-oriented and concentrate on policy implementation. It will also derive its orientations from the specific demands that will emanate from member states, in order to adapt to the requirements of the information and knowledge sector that evolves quite rapidly.

20. Emphasis will be placed on promoting and assisting the establishment of national coordinating bodies for the collection, management and dissemination of geographic data, and in the development of systems and services to enable decision makers and all members of the society to find out what geographic data exist, where they exist and how to obtain and use them, so that they can participate more effectively in the decision process.

21. Major outputs will be:

- The convening of a group of experts on look into Geoinformation as a national asset (2005);
- One publication of the integration of Geo-spatial data infrastructures within national information policies (2004);
- The continuous maintenance of the Africa-SDI implementation guide;
- The up-grading and maintenance of a clearinghouse gateway at ECA;
- The maintenance of a database on the status of GI development;
- The development of an African geoinformatics curriculum based on a modular system of short courses, responsive to long-term education at various levels as well as short-term training and re-training in geoinformatics;
- One regional seminar on “cooperative mechanisms for management of information resources and services, with special attention to geo-spatial products” (2004);
- The organization of capacity-building workshops on “spatial data standards, clearinghouse and metadata: three in 2003, one in connection with the ICA conference in Durban (August), one in connection with Africa GIS in Dakar, (October); one in connection with the FIG conference in Morocco (November); one in 2004; one in 2005;
- The provision of advisory services upon request, to member States, RECs and IGOs;
- The organization of and reporting to the fourth meeting of CODI (2005); and
- The production of information and dissemination kits.

22. The sub-programme will continue to build upon existing and new partnerships to leverage ECA resources. It will strengthen its collaborative relations with regional and international bodies as well as with sister institutions of the UN system with convergent objectives, to mutually support activities of common interest.