



CODIST NEWSLETTER

THE NEWS BULLETIN OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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En Route to CODIST

The first CODIST meeting (CODIST-1) is being organized by the ICT, Science, and Technology Division of ECA. It will be held from 27 April to 1 May 2009. The venue is the headquarters of ECA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

For operational reasons, and so as to enable CODIST to discharge its responsibilities in an effective, coordinated and focused manner, the meeting is organized in plenary and sub-committee sessions. To that effect three subcommittees have been established in each of the specialized fields, namely: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); Geoinformation; and Science & Technology.

The subcommittees may establish ad-hoc or standing working groups, as necessary, for the duration of the meeting, between meetings, and as long as necessary. A joint report on plenary and sub-committee meetings shall be agreed at a final plenary meeting.

Apart from the plenary and the sub-committee sessions, a series of workshops are planned to take place in conjunction with the meeting.

In this issue, we are focused on the activities of the Subcommittee on Geoinformation.

Participants, partners and members of the general public are encouraged to send in feedback to the publishers.

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"We need nothing less than a Science Revolution in Africa. This will make the difference that we have for so long been searching for."

Abdoulie Janneh,

Under-Secretary General,

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Geoinformation for Development

Development is a process of affecting desired changes in the real world. To be able to deliver these changes, the spatial contents of the real world, geospatial information, must be known. Geoinformation products are thus indispensable to policy making, physical planning and sustainable development of the economy of any nation.

Though Geoinformation does not arouse political interest, it is the basic infrastructure for sustainable national development. With the development in space and digital technologies in the past two decades, the time and cost for making spatial information and maps available for development and management purposes has been greatly reduced. Therefore, to ensure that appropriate geoinformation products are used in policy making and hence sustainable development, each state/nation should, among others, evolve a mapping policy, create state/national topographical database, invest in capacity building. That is best done by adopting an infrastructure approach, namely spatial data infrastructure (SDI), the backbone of the challenge for using geoinformation for development in Africa.

The various areas of the economy where application of geoinformation products is central to best practice policy making and implementation include: good governance, security, population census, land administration, environmental monitoring, public utilities, boundaries and conflict resolution, tourism, communication, health, transportation etc. Geographic Information Systems provides formal tools and methods to represent, analyze complex biophysical and social indicators and provides various "what if" planning scenarios results in a controlled (scientifically repeatable) manner in order to take a better decision. It is therefore critical to the development of the Knowledge Economy and a just Information Society.

The CODIST meeting will explore the benefit of Geoinformation to develop spatially connected information and will highlight the Geoinformation perspective under the CODIST sub-themes: under the following two sub-themes: (i) Enabling Environment for Innovation Systems and (ii) Innovation and Economic Growth.

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Perspectives on key issues by two geoinformation specialists in Africa

In this issue we ask prominent African specialists to express their views on the uptake of Geospatial science and technology in Africa and explore the future of geoinformation in Africa.

Dr. Shuaib Lwasa is **Reserach Scientist, and Lecturer of Geography and Geospatial Science** at the Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. His perspectives are as follows:

Q: What do you see as the main gaps, bottle-necks and challenges for the uptake of geospatial science and technology by African policy makers?

A: There are several, including limited knowledge application, technologist nature of geospatial science, immediate needs of policy makers i.e. desire to solve Africa's problems with a single stroke, quick fixes. Despite the importance of geospatial science and technology in knowledge generation and application, many African policy makers do not view knowledge management in a long-term perspective to enable investment in the infrastructure needed.

Q: What are from your perspectives the "key elements" of the importance of geospatial science and technology for enhancing policy decisions by African nations for socio-economic development?

A: The key elements include: providing information that is policy t which provides answers to the most pressing needs. Creating Geo-Information products that can get buy-in from policy makers e.g. financial or resource allocation by administrative units. Demonstrating the economic value of Geo-Information and how it can spur other economic sectors. Providing Geo-Information at modest costs and where applicable free to stimulate its utilization in creative ways. For example community-village or local maps and additional information on natural resources has a potential for influencing the ways in which communities think about and manage their resources.

Q: What type of quick wins do you see to stimulate the usage of geospatial science and technology?

A; Depends on the country and maybe region and priority areas but poverty maps, economic maps, resource allocation maps and infrastructure maps have in some areas stimulated desire for geo-information amongst governments, relief agencies and communities. Establishment of information services to provide information products that can stir up the economies.

Q: Why is Geoinformation science and technology not well utilized in the 'working environment' of African policy-makers and decision-makers?

A: At the moment Geo-Information science and products may not be seen as relevant to the policy makers. It also largely remains technocratic.

Q: If our aim is to influence policy in the uptake of Geospatial science and technology, what are the necessary components or building blocks?

A: Create information products, and identify champions amongst policy makers.

Q: What are the approaches to integrating social and economic data in a common reference and format?

A: This can be done by creating a wider view of Geo-Information management system that would start with the basic data integration points. This would allow capture of all relevant and necessary data to

enable full integration. For example by geo-coding houses and households during a census, the basic data can be captured at such a scale that would enable full integration. This can also reduce duplication of efforts that come with parallel or project specific data capture and analysis which makes it more difficult to integrate.

Q: If one can address the cost of and access to spatial information for Africa, what else is necessary?

A: Access by information generators and integrators would have to be followed by access by the public. Therefore one of the requirements is dissemination for example of village maps at local level. The majority of spatial information users group is the public and when it is utilized, new things emerge, creative products are developed, decisions at all levels made in a timely manner and therefore this downstream dissemination can be sensitive to costs but the benefits would outweigh the initial costs. People would know what evidence exists if it is put at strategic points for access for policy makers and public targeting.

Q: Use of geoinformation data from a systems perspective: How is real impact achieved?

A: Impact can be achieved through:

- Multi-stakeholder targeting
- Mechanisms for sector information integration
- Coordinating the multitude of funders in spatial information generation and management initiatives
- User driven but with 'agent' guidance through creating buy-in information products

Q: Why?

- A:
- Minimum critical human resource in geo-information is near real now in many African countries
 - Vibrant economic sector (it can be further stirred up by information with multiplier effects) with a potential for marketable information products such as Telecommunications sector which also has a potential for reaching out and extending geo-information to many users.

"Geoinformation experts should use the language of policy makers"

Mr. Bassole Andre, based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso is a **senior Expert in Geoinformation in Africa** with a rich and long experience in the promotion and setting up of NSDI in many countries in Africa.

In his view the CODIST theme should enable participants understand how knowledge and use of geoinformation can translated into innovative development actions.

"If geoinformation science and technology could be made transparent to the end users of GI services and to policy makers, we would win the battle of mainstreaming GI applications into all development sectors he explains".

"There is a need to move from concept to implementation in our approach to feeding the policy making sphere. As geoinformation experts we are still keeping our sector-centred attitude and have not really moved much into a geoinformation services delivery position. Secondly, we lack the policy support translated into funding of the SDI development actions. Integrating SDI development and NICI implementation would be one of the ways to overcome this big issue.

He also suggests that strong input of geoinformation services into the national strategic actions plans (PRSPs, MDGs, adaptation to

climate change and variability, development planning and monitoring/evaluation at local level, etc.) is the best way of showcasing the added value of geoinformation application to the national development.

He says, "the process should begin with an analysis of all strategic plans (existing and in development) and identification of how and in what GI can boost their performances; selection of key examples in connection with the NICI plans to demonstrate the added value of GI applications; Development of Geo-enabled NICI plans, implementation with an efficient monitoring / evaluation mechanism to improve subsequent actions".

As to the best approaches needed to integrate social and economic data into a common reference and format, he is forthright:

"Spatial data infrastructure development is the answer as it entails the development of core, standard-based datasets and interoperability among systems. The operational integration becomes a question of selecting the right datasets and applying the right analytical methodology, using the appropriate tools, guided by the nature of the problem to solve".

Finally, he explains that the impact of the use of geoinformation for system perspective would depend on the quality of the data, although "real impact will come first from the adaptation of the methodology used as a solution to the problem. Problem analysis must first be undertaken to make sure that the required data are going to be used", he concludes.

CODIST-Geo

With CODIST placing emphasis on the information society, CODIST-Geo (as the Subcommittee on Geoinformation is referred to) treats mapping and related activities as data collection and processing activities in the overall information management continuum.

The formal sessions of the subcommittee are structured into (i) Reports, (ii) Technical Issues, (iii) Policy Issues, (iv) New Trends, and (v) Special Topics.

Following the adoption of the revised terms of reference for CODI-Geo, an Executive Working Group was established. The Executive Working Group has since formed working groups on: Standards (chaired by EIS Africa), AFREF (co-chaired by RCMRD and AOCRS); Capacity Building (chaired by RECTAS); and Fundamental Data Sets (chaired by South Africa).

Please send further comments and inputs to the following email address: codist-l@dgroups.org
With cc: to Mr. Andre Nonguierma at ANonguierma@uneca.org.

Geo Information Side Events

Mapping in the fight against HIV-AIDS in Africa

This is a pre-CODIST workshop, scheduled for Monday 27 April 2009 entitled: Enlisting National Mapping Agencies in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: Building Partnerships with Ministries of Health & Social Services and National AIDS Commissions.

The event is sponsored by UNAIDS, ECA, WHO, and a consortium of US partners including MEASURE Evaluation, USAID, and the US State Department.

The workshop seeks to promote collaborative examples of the effective use of geoinformation science and technologies that lead to more effective HIV/AIDS interventions, multi-sectoral solutions, as well as stronger spatial data infrastructures in support of national strategic plans to arrest HIV/AIDS transmission.

Workshop Objectives

- *Introduce workshop participants to international good practices from across the CODIST community and non-health sectors, in the use of geography to inform decision-making and strategic planning*
- *Review lessons learned from national and international experience*
- *Raise awareness on the importance of standardization in local naming and coding conventions for geographic entities*
- *Promote innovative cross-sector exchanges in support of integrated, harmonized national spatial data*
- *Strengthen and expand regional and national partnership building opportunities with international, regional and local organizations*

The workshop will consist of both plenary-style presentations and roundtable discussions and will also include opportunities for NMA and NMOH/NAC participants from each attending member State to meet, identify mutually rewarding collaborative opportunities, and plan next steps.

Workshop on 'Revamping the implementation plan for the African Geodetic Reference Frame (AFREF)'

Knowing that the foundation of accurate geospatial information is a uniform coordinate reference system, ECA is implementing the African Reference Frame (AFREF) Project with the view to build an unified geodetic reference frame for Africa.

The main aim of the workshop is to engage the community of AFREF stakeholders in defining next steps to move the project forward. The workshop is organized by ECA in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the AFREF Project International Steering Committee.

Workshop Objectives

- *Update stakeholders on the status and on-going activities of the AFREF initiative*
- *Review project objectives, deliverables, and timelines*
- *Present, discuss, and adopt scientifically sound and mutually agreeable methodologies for the future computing of the transformation parameters*
- *Discuss and endorse the implementation plan proposed by ECA and the AUC, placing particular emphasis on the proposed management structure.*

The workshop will feature some formal technical presentations and a demonstrative exercise on how to retrieve the ephemeris data off a GPS unit, how to access the GNSS archive (for example, at HartRAO), and how to compute and apply the adjustment coefficients.

While the workshop will be of particular interest and importance to National Mapping Agency representatives attending CODIST,

anyone with an interest in geodetic control, geospatial positioning, surveying, and GPS/GNSS is welcome to attend the workshop.

The AFREF event will be held on Tuesday, April 28, 2009.

Other CODIST Sub-committee News

Technology in Government in Africa (TIGA) Awards

TIGA Awards are an ECA/Canada Fund for Africa event, organized every two years, aimed at recognising the work of African Governments in the effective use of ICTs for public services delivery as part of ECA's African Information Society Initiative (AISII) and Canada's ICTs for development programme.

The Awards are targeted at African Governments and institutions based in Africa that are engaged in initiating, developing and implementing ICTs for public services and contributing to the development of the Information Society in Africa. The main objectives are to:

- Create greater awareness of the role of ICTs in the public services and the development process within the framework of the AISII;
- Encourage African Governments and institutions to use ICTs for development in general and improved public/citizen's services in particular; and
- Motivate other African stakeholders in effective utilization of ICTs for citizen's services.

The awards mainly focus on entries in four categories including public service delivery to citizens/communities; improved health services through the use of ICTs; improved educational services through the use of ICTs; and Public Private Partnership (PPP) in economic and financial e-services delivery.

For the 2009 TIGA Awards programme, over 60 projects from 24 countries were submitted. Currently, the evaluation and selection process is underway by the Panel of Judges and the winners will be announced at the Awards ceremony which is scheduled to take place on 30th April 2009 during the first meeting of the Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (CODIST-1) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The 2009 TIGA Awards is organized in collaboration with the Governments of Canada and Finland, with support from Ethiopian Airlines, Microsoft, Alcatel-Lucent, OSISA, Jupiter Hotel, Harmony Hotel and Ethiopian Insurance Corporation.



General Information on the Conference

Who Can attend

Participation

There will be three categories of participants at the conference: official delegates, observers and exhibitors.

Official Delegates

These are persons designated and sponsored by a member state to represent, speak and make decisions on behalf of the states.

Observers

Experts, practitioners, and stakeholders in any substantive field (ICT, geo-information and science and technology) within CODIST's purview who are not official delegates are cordially invited to participate as observers.

While observers are free to attend all CODIST sessions, they are not allowed to vote. Observers are responsible for all their travel and subsistence costs.

Exhibitors

Persons, organizations, or corporate entities that have products, services, or information to exhibit and disseminate are invited to attend as exhibitors.

Side-Events

Monday, 27th April 2009: Workshop on Enlisting National Mapping Agencies in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: Building Partnerships with Ministries of Health and NAC.

Tuesday, 28th April 2009: AFREF Workshop

Tuesday, 28th April 2009: The 1st Follow-up Workshop on WSIS, Tunis+3

Tuesday, 28th April 2009: Workshop on Legal and Regulatory Framework for the Knowledge Economy

Tuesday, 28th April 2009: Experts Review workshop on developing a Business Model for technology park and center on excellence in Africa: Incubation and Technology Parks for Economic Growth

Thursday, 30th April 2009 - 18:30: AWARDS Ceremony of the 2009 "Technology in Government in Africa, TIGA"

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