



**AMERICAS SYMPOSIUM** 2020  
Better Together: Geospatial Information

# ***AMERIGEO – UNGGIM-Americas Joint Session 2020***

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENT**

Communication, Cooperation and Coordination (3Cs)  
Working group

Co-Chairs : Valrie Grant, Rafael Monge, Mark Urban

## *Abstract*

*In order to attain the optimum level of economic, social and environmental benefits that can be expected from an adequate management and use of geospatial data , strong engagement of a maximum of stakeholders from all the countries of the Americas should be ensured. For this to occur, specific regional needs should be addressed, in particular those from developing countries of the region.*

*AmeriGEO Co-Chairs and the Board of Director of UNGGIM Americas, have agreed on working together to find common activities and goals to enhance the use of geospatial, EO, geographic and statistical data in the region to address those developmental challenges.*

*Among our key findings:*

- *Convert the 3Cs working Group into a permanent Working group or Committee*
- *Identify Stakeholders in each country and establish a Regional Register of stakeholders*
- *Establish an online knowledge base (by leveraging existing resources\*)*
- *Enhance regional cooperation and knowledge share amongst the members.*

## *Background*

1. The Regional Committee on Geospatial Information Management for the Americas (UN-GGIM Americas) is a Regional Committee of the United Nations Group of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) with the responsibility for determining relevant regional issues for the management of geospatial information, and based on the exchange of knowledge, experiences and technologies by the Member States, takes the necessary measures to maximize the economic, social and environmental benefits derived from its use. UN-GGIM Americas also works to establish links and mechanisms for cooperation with other related geospatial information programs and participates in conferences, forums and activities promoted by other international and regional organizations.

2. AmeriGEO is an initiative that seeks to promote collaboration and coordination among the GEO members in the American continent, “to realize a future wherein decisions and actions, for the benefit of the region, are informed by coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observations and information”. The initiative seeks to strengthen the engagement of other Americas countries, and to work with the flagships to tailor their work to address regional needs, in particular, those from developing countries of the Americas.

3. Recognizing the potential of synergies, coordination, platforms and activities across both bodies, AmeriGEO Co-Chairs and the Board of Director of UNGGIM Americas, have agreed on working together to find common activities and goals to enhance the use of geospatial, EO and statistical data in the region to address developmental challenges. A joint virtual meeting is scheduled to be held on 9 September 2020. The meeting aims to identify common goals and activities that can be achieved through a strong collaboration and partnership between the two bodies. The partnership between AmeriGEO and UN-GGIM Americas is to be solidified through a declaration, which is a statement of intent for both bodies and interested partners moving forward to advance the use of geospatial data in the Americas.

4. In order to prepare the declaration, three working groups were created, i) Communication, cooperation and Coordination, ii) Capacity development and iii) Data, Information and Knowledge Sharing with the general objective of engaging the membership of each body to discuss issues and identify recommendations pertinent to advancing collaboration and cooperation on the use of geospatial information in the Americas. The issues and recommendations are to be used to prepare the declaration.

5. This is the background report of the working group on **Communication, Cooperation and Coordination (3Cs)**, co-Chaired by Valrie Grant, Rafael Monge and Mark Urban with 16 members (list of working group members is at Annex 1). This report provides a summary of the discussions and responses to the four questions posed to the working group. The report supplements the power point presentation that will be delivered during the virtual joint session.

## *Objectives of the 3Cs working group*

6. The objectives of the 3Cs working group were to discuss the four questions posed and based on the outcome from the discussions, identify potential activities for future work between both bodies. In addition, and most importantly the working group was required to review the

draft declaration and submit amendments and inputs as deemed necessary and relevant to the subjects of communications, cooperation and coordination.

7. The participants of 3Cs convened 5 virtual meetings, which were attended by an average of approx. 10 people with equal representation across both bodies.

8. The following are the four questions that were posed and suggested as a basis for discussion to the working group.

### *Discussions and Recommendations*

#### Discussion topics for the 3Cs working group:

1. Why should the region think about 3Cs?
2. What measures can be taken to strengthen 3Cs in the Americas among stakeholders?
3. Strengthening the increased participation from member states, meetings, working groups?
4. How can we better promote regional activities?

### *Question 1: Why do we need regional 3Cs?*

There is a need to communicate effectively: as there is not a lot of opportunities to communicate between stakeholders of this community, we work mostly in isolation, within institutions, in different countries. Not many channels of communication exist where people can exchange information in order to see where people are advancing. It is hard to stimulate interest because there are many sources of information, such as the GEO/AmeriGEO and other platforms created for this matter. However, it is difficult to find ways to gather the stakeholders, keep them informed and engaged together, with a common agenda. It is necessary to have people specifically dedicated to this task, responsible for achieving these goals, since this will not be organically generated otherwise. In this sense it is important to work together on communication.

The 3Cs are important because there is strength, synergies and sustainable support when entities work together on a trusted and continued basis; it is not an easy process but the benefits are immeasurable. These are: increased knowledge, new ideas, new products and new methods. This sharing provides the ability to leapfrog – avoiding pitfalls in the implementation process.

Hence the importance of having regional cooperation; once the information cascades downward much information gets lost in translation.

In particular, when considering cooperation with small countries and regions, they do not gain all the benefits one could expect from the information, communication and coordination provided by the “big” organizations. This is why it is important to better integrate Latin American

countries and SIDS into the group, so that they can gain the benefits from the information in a timely manner.

Regarding the small islands perspective: the diversification of the economies and/or disruption due to natural disasters, all show why it is critical to have cooperation for what goes beyond borders. It is fundamental to reach some sort of preservation and use it to generate synergy within the geospatial community.

*Question 2: What measures can be taken to strengthen 3Cs in the Americas among stakeholders?*

The missing mechanism is : execution and implementation. Many resolutions have been taken and many agreements reached, but the problem is execution and implementation, at grassroots level. Massive use of digital technology means through modern communication tools is critical especially in this period.

**How do we get more people involved?**

In particular some forums such as CSA are having more regular meetings and other forums to enhance communication and have a wider reach. Also bringing along research and educational institutions (universities, research institutes, IT colleges etc.), private organizations which are the grassroots source of information. Through seminars, working groups and by extension forwarding information to the next level.

It is important to identify who are the stakeholders, as this will define the means/methods and mechanisms of the 3Cs. Also, noting that stakeholders at all levels are bombarded with information and therefore depending on your level – manager, technical etc. and based upon the objectives you will select your preferred topics and mechanism to 3Cs.

We also need to be conscious of strategies and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination. Possible mechanisms include online newsletters, webinars (possible time frames - monthly, quarterly, semi-annually) special communication platforms for a closed group discussion, special forums, bilateral personnel exchanges/secondments, use of websites and LinkedIn Group. Joint work items and special focus groups engender cooperation and coordination.

*Question 3: Strengthening the increased participation from member states – meetings, working groups? & Question 4: How can we better promote regional activities?*

How can we better promote our regional activities to get greater participation from across the Region, not just from some individuals, but make sure to get representation from all the countries?

Financial resources are essential to have the incentive and to materialize active participation.

Time consuming but effective: from a public sector point of view, we may need to understand more about the roles and functions of some of the agencies or government departments, and from these, to see if we can identify the priority areas for national development. This can be achieved by identifying the issues that are of greatest importance (e.g. management and mitigation of natural disasters) and assisting them to appreciate the value of EO and geospatial investigation. Through this it would be possible to access financing. Targeting ministries to determine the criteria of national development (for the Caribbean region: Blue Economy Programme, very much GIS-based, with various ministries involved).

Example: showcasing how and where EO was used to determine how to fight fire and organize rescue efforts; identifying relevant and striking examples that would speak directly to their needs to help them appreciating the value of EO.

Using familiar features: e.g. the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework: SDI being very important but with needs of guidance, this Framework took a simple approach with guiding principles with relevant starting points.

This Group should be mandated to set up a Channel through which Member States can communicate in a definite way, shape and form their priorities, to then provide them with examples, case studies or other Member States' experience that can be learned from, in order to determine and initiate the kind of cooperation that will help them get the benefits.

UN-GGIM Americas Rolando Ocampo (MX) as chair initiative inviting many Caribbean countries: To get the countries' stakeholders involved, and then sustain the interests of all to participate across the region. So money is needed, but also will and leadership would be required.

Specific rules and groups: people willing to engage, but don't know how they can be part of something or what are the ways to get involved and receive the relevant information. Once this is clear, it is easier to get access to places etc.

Clear communication

In principle, there is a huge interest, but lack of knowledge about how to get to the information, the solution can therefore be sometimes as simple as having somebody at the agency promoting the work. The majority of people do not know what "Geospatial" means. So communication can be very effective and the language has to be used smartly, so as to encourage more participation.

Suggestion: Let's start small. We know little about ourselves, what we are looking for in terms of capacity etc. Starting by developing 3Cs among ourselves, and from there on disseminate more largely and reach out wider.

Participation from Member States is of fundamental importance. No Members means no activities. The challenge is convincing governments and their representatives that participating in these bodies and processes are beneficial. A major challenge for small island states and small economies is human resource and financial constraint – often times one or two persons are responsible for 4-5 subject areas and it becomes difficult to manage their national work and what is seen as extra – regional/global work. We need to demonstrate / showcase and communicate what are the tangible benefits to the individual and to the government of participation in UN-GGIM Americas and AmeriGEO. After that it is a decision and the strategy of engagement that national governments and their representatives need to make.

### *Contribution to the Declaration*

This group discussed the content of the Declaration from its point of view, in order to take into account aspects related more specifically to coordination, cooperation and communication.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the discussions and the areas that merit attention to ensure effective communication, coordination and collaboration in the Americas the following is recommended:

- Convert the 3Cs working Group into a permanent Working group or Committee
- Prepare a TOR for the new 3Cs committee . The terms of reference will provide the framework and set the expectations for the committee.
- Identify Stakeholders in each country and establish a Regional Register of stakeholders. This will allow for a better representation across all member states and effective flow of information to local stakeholders.
- Compile a register of existing and/or past initiatives of Communication media (regional and local) and consequently establish a Newsletter or collaborate with an existing one
  - PAIGH could be the secretariat for newsletter
  - It would highlight upcoming activities across the region
  - Would feature articles, success stories and happenings?/events across the region
- Establish an online knowledge base (by leveraging existing resources\*)
- Prepare a stakeholder communication plan
- Promote broader participation in regional initiatives like the America's Academy
- COVID19 impact on GIS professionals (organize some activity on this topic). A critical component in any geospatial endeavor is the people. In this time of COVID 19 Geospatial professionals are struggling with all the changes and uncertainty brought about by the global pandemic. These professionals have also been front and center of many response efforts while adjusting to the changes. The working group is therefore recommending hosting a webevent focused on people dynamics in times of crisis and the emotional wellness of the geospatial professional.

## ANNEX 1

### List of Working Group Members

Last Name	First Name	Position	Organization	Email Address
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## ANNEX 2

### *Points for further discussion for ToRs and List of existing initiatives*

Academy of the Americas: under construction, but progressing fast and already online:

[https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/1eb0b75b94ac4409af38c6210415e9bc/page/page\\_2/?data\\_id=dataSource\\_4-survey%3A7%2CdataSource\\_3-survey%3A11](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/1eb0b75b94ac4409af38c6210415e9bc/page/page_2/?data_id=dataSource_4-survey%3A7%2CdataSource_3-survey%3A11)

Platform

Integration of Platforms :

To know each other: coordinating initiatives, in Capacity Building and Data work

Central body ?: gathering people, to coordinate and push

Incentivized by a WP or Project, with joint concrete activities

Touch-point meetings to know what to communicate

Coordination group to give continuous support

Report to Secretariat

Newsletter for the Region; social media; on activities for next 6 months, 1 year

Regional Calendar

Special communication

Existing previous initiatives

SDI Chile (Macarena)

GeoSur

GSDI Newsletter (2 examples sent by Cecille)

AmeriGEO Newsletter (bi-annual)– extend to broader participation/contributions

Dedicated section in each of existing newsletter ?

Human resources...

Audience

Inter-organizational meetings; elevated coordination

Structure to be created to take action

Granularity? To take down action and implementation to more focused and specialized levels  
E.g. Disasters WG etc.

Declaration: Model, + developments; management of points at technical level

PAIGH issuing Newsletter – identifying leadership