

United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) Private Sector Network

Terms of Reference

Revised on 24 July 2025

Preamble

The value and utility of geospatial information have been expanding exponentially, mirroring its growing maturity and integration into nearly every facet of human endeavor. Far beyond serving as a mere enabler of daily activities, geospatial information has emerged as a powerful driver of innovation, development, and excellence across nations. It is reshaping traditional business models and catalyzing significant social and economic transformation—so much so that it is now recognized as a foundational element of a burgeoning geospatial economy.

This transformative potential has been acknowledged by the United Nations, particularly in the context of global development and prosperity, with a special focus on developing countries and vulnerable populations. In response to the urgent need for strengthened international cooperation in geospatial information management, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in July 2011 (ECOSOC Resolution 2011/24).

ECOSOC encouraged the Committee to convene regular high-level, multi-stakeholder discussions and global forums to foster inclusive dialogue among all relevant actors. From its inception, UN-GGIM has recognized the critical role of academia, research institutions, professional bodies, and the private sector in advancing the global use of geospatial information for evidence-based decision-making. More recently, this role has expanded to include supporting the measurement and monitoring of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Over the past several years, private sector stakeholders have actively contributed to UN-GGIM processes at both global and regional levels. However, there is growing recognition that a more coordinated and structured network would enhance communication, collaboration, and impact—benefiting both private sector participants and Member States.

The Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information, adopted at the conclusion of the Third UN-GGIM High-Level Forum in Beijing on 24 October 2014, called for strengthened global, regional, and national collaboration. It emphasized capacity building and the development of geospatial information management systems to support sustainable development, in partnership with intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, academia, and industry.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development further underscored the importance of transparent and accountable public-private cooperation to harness diverse data sources—including earth observations and geospatial information—while ensuring national ownership in tracking progress (Paragraph 76). The 2016 Progress Report on the SDGs (E/2016/75) highlighted the need to explore new data sources and technologies through partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and academia. It also emphasized the essential integration of geospatial and statistical data for producing key development indicators (Paragraph 147).

Establishment

Building on the foundational contributions of academia and industry, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), at its sixth session held in New York in August 2016, deliberated on a proposal to formalize these partnerships. Recognizing the critical role of academic institutions and private sector entities in advancing geospatial information management, the Committee endorsed the establishment of two dedicated collaborative platforms: the UN-GGIM Academic Network and the UN-GGIM Private Sector Network.

Through Decision 6/101, the Committee acknowledged the call within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for stronger public-private partnerships to harness emerging data sources and technologies. The formalization of these networks (documented in E/C.20/2016/15) marked a strategic step toward fostering structured, inclusive, and sustained engagement with key non-governmental stakeholders ensuring their expertise and innovation continue to inform and support global geospatial governance.

Vision

To foster a dynamic and engaged Private Sector Network (PSN) that collaborates, supports and strengthens UN-GGIM programs that fosters a sustainable global geospatial information agenda.

Mission

To actively engage the global private sector in a collaborative partnership with UN-GGIM and its Member States, leveraging innovation, expertise, and technology to advance the development, integration, and application of geospatial information. PSN is committed for an inclusive dialogue, supporting capacity building, and contributing to the creation of sustainable geospatial ecosystems that empower countries to address global challenges, deliver citizen-centric services, and achieve the United Nations' development goals.

Purpose

The UN-GGIM Private Sector Network (PSN) serves as a mechanism for private sector organizations to engage with the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). It provides a platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration between the private sector and the broader geospatial community, supporting

the development and use of geospatial information for sustainable development and global good.

Guiding Principles

In pursuit of its vision and mission, the UN-GGIM Private Sector Network (UN-GGIM:PSN) shall align its activities with the following guiding principles:

1. Commitment to the Public Good

UN-GGIM:PSN is a vital stakeholder within the broader UN-GGIM ecosystem. It shall mobilize private sector resources, innovation, and expertise in service of the greater societal and public good, contributing meaningfully to global geospatial development.

2. Inclusive and Representative Engagement

The PSN shall actively engage the full spectrum of geospatial and related industries—including small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and industry associations—ensuring broad representation and extending UN-GGIM’s outreach to a wider network of private sector actors. All engagement shall uphold the dignity and spirit of service to society.

3. Fostering Public-Private Collaboration

Embracing the principles of interdependence and shared responsibility, PSN shall promote strong public-private partnerships. It will align its efforts with the values of unity, collaboration, and common purpose that underpin UN-GGIM’s mission.

4. Bridging Innovation and Application

PSN shall serve as a dynamic interface between geospatial information providers and end-user communities. It will curate and share knowledge through case studies, practical applications, and best practices—demonstrating the value of geospatial information to both traditional and emerging user sectors.

5. Global and Regional Engagement

The PSN shall actively collaborate with UN-GGIM regional entities and contribute to global and regional committees. Through this engagement, it will support the development of coherent, scalable, and sustainable geospatial solutions that address regional needs and global priorities.

Tasks

Key Tasks of UN-GGIM-PSN Members are:

1. Strategic Collaboration & Policy Engagement

- Engage with UN-GGIM Member States to shape global geospatial policy and strategy.
- Provide private sector perspectives in the development of global geospatial frameworks and standards.
- Participate in UN-GGIM global and regional meetings, contributing to thematic discussions and working groups.

2. Innovation & Knowledge Sharing

- Promote the development and adoption of innovative geospatial technologies and solutions.
- Curate and disseminate case studies, best practices, and success stories demonstrating the value of geospatial information.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange between private sector members and public sector stakeholders.

3. Capacity Building & Outreach

- Support capacity development initiatives, especially in developing countries, through training, mentorship, and technology transfer.
- Extend outreach to small, medium and large enterprises and industry associations to ensure inclusive participation.
- Organize and contribute to workshops, webinars, and forums to build awareness and technical capabilities.

4. Public-Private Partnership Facilitation

- Foster collaboration between public and private sectors to co-develop geospatial solutions for sustainable development.
- Encourage joint initiatives that align with the UN development goals .
- Act as a bridge between geospatial data providers and end-user communities.

5. Governance & Representation

- Elect and support the PSN Board and Secretariat to ensure effective leadership and coordination.
- Maintain transparent and inclusive decision-making processes within the network.
- Represent the PSN in official UN-GGIM forums and external engagements, ensuring alignment with the network's values and objectives.

6. Communication & Visibility

- Maintain an up-to-date public directory of PSN members on the official website.
- Develop communication materials to highlight PSN contributions and impact.
- Promote the role of the private sector in advancing geospatial information through media, publications, and events.

7. Monitoring & Reporting

- Report annually to the UN-GGIM Committee of Experts on PSN activities, achievements, and contributions.
- Monitor progress against strategic objectives and adjust priorities as needed.
- Collect feedback from members to continuously improve PSN operations and engagement.

Membership

The UN-GGIM Private Sector Network (UN-GGIM:PSN) is a coalition of private sector organizations and industry associations operating within the geospatial and related industries. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with relevant geospatial interests may also participate.

Membership is open to legally established entities that demonstrate a commitment to advancing the goals and values of UN-GGIM.

Membership may be granted either through invitation by the PSN Board or upon approval of an application submitted by an eligible organization. All prospective members must be legally registered in their country of origin or establishment.

Participation in the PSN does not impose any formal obligations on member organizations. There are no membership fees, and members are expected to cover their own participation costs. PSN operates on the principle of voluntary engagement, encouraging members to contribute their expertise, resources, and insights in support of global geospatial initiatives and the broader public good.

Structure

The UN-GGIM Private Sector Network (UN-GGIM:PSN), recognized as an official observer of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), operates as an informally structured yet purpose-driven network. Guided by its Terms of Reference, the PSN functions as a thematic group on global geospatial information management and reports annually to the Committee of Experts. All PSN members need to strictly adhere to UN guidelines and protocols.

The current governance structure of the UN-GGIM:PSN includes the following roles:

- Chair of the PSN Board
- Deputy Chair
- Secretary
- Board Members
- Regional Chairs
- Administrative support and coordination are provided by a dedicated Secretariat.

All leadership positions are elected for a term of three years.

Governance

UN-GGIM-PSN governance guidelines are as follows:

- Membership is open to all private sector organizations and industry associations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in geospatial information, technology, and services.
- Participation is voluntary and free of charge.
- Each member organization may designate one official representative, with the option to assign alternates as needed.
- Members are expected to actively contribute to PSN activities, meetings, and initiatives.
- Members shall adhere to the PSN Code of Conduct and uphold the principles of the United Nations, including integrity, respect, and cooperation.
- The PSN Chair is elected by the Board to serve a term of up to three years (renewable once by consensus).

- PSN Chair serves as the principal representative of PSN in all official matters, facilitates meetings, oversees initiatives, and ensures alignment with UN-GGIM priorities.
- PSN Chair consults regularly with members to represent diverse views and consensus-based positions.
- PSN Board of Directors is composed of 7–11 elected members representing geographic and industry diversity to provide strategic direction and oversight for PSN activities.
- PSN Board meets at least twice per year, virtually or in-person.
- The PSN Board appoints Regional Chairs for the following regions - Americas, Europe, Africa, Arab States, and Asia-Pacific
- The Regional Chairs serve as focal points in their respective regions and coordinate regional activities and promote local engagement with PSN initiatives. They report on regional priorities and challenges to the Board.
- The PSN Secretariat is formed by one or more member organizations who volunteer to provide administrative and logistical support.
- Secretariat responsibilities include organizing meetings, maintaining the website and membership list, documenting decisions, and supporting communication and outreach.
- Decisions within the PSN are made by consensus whenever possible. When consensus cannot be reached, decisions may be made by a simple majority vote of present and eligible voting members.
- Quorum for voting is met when at least half of Board members are present.
- A publicly accessible list of member organizations shall be maintained on the UN-GGIM PSN website.
- Key governance documents, strategic plans, and reports will be published to ensure transparency.
- The PSN may issue public statements, policy positions, or event summaries to engage with broader geospatial and development communities.
- This Governance Framework may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Board, following consultation with the general membership.
- Proposed amendments must be circulated at least 30 days in advance of a vote.

Meetings

- The PSN shall convene regular meetings, including:
 - An Annual General Meeting (AGM) held during or around the UN-GGIM session.
 - Board Meetings as scheduled.
 - Regional and Thematic Meetings organized as needed.
- Meetings may be held virtually or in-person.
- Outcomes and decisions from meetings will be documented and made available to all members.
- Additional PSN meetings may coincide with major geospatial conferences.
- English will be the working language for all meetings.