
COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF
OUTER SPACE

Forty-ninth session

Vienna, 7 - 16 June 2006

Agenda item 14

Other Matters

New item on agenda of the Committee: proposal submitted by Brazil

**“International Cooperation in Promoting the Use of Geospatial Data for
Sustainable Development”**

The capacity to use geospatial information is critical to a range of activities having a direct impact on national development. Environmental monitoring, natural resources management, meteorology, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, the creation of national topographic map systems for territorial planning are but a few examples of how geospatial data has come to play an indispensable role in the promotion of national sustainable development.

International cooperation has a prominent role to play in the promotion of such capacity. The experience of countries which have emerged in the last two decades as effective users of geospatial data makes a compelling case for expanding international cooperation in that field. This notwithstanding, a larger swath of the globe still lacks the human, technological and institutional capacity to benefit from the use of geospatial data.

The international community should consider ways and means to foster the dissemination of such capacity, with a view to achieving its true universalization.

To that end, a proposal is submitted to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to consider, during its next three sessions, a new agenda item entitled “International Cooperation in Promoting the Use of Geospatial Data for Sustainable Development”.

The main purpose of this proposal is to foster international cooperation in the establishment of the national spatial data infrastructure necessary to capture, process, analyze and apply geospatial data, as an important tool for the achievement of national sustainable development.

While discussing this issue, the Committee might wish to focus on and draw lessons from activities already undertaken in that regard by countries, regional and/or multilateral organizations and arrangements. By acknowledging and building upon these past and present experiences, the Committee would be in a better position to propose more widespread and integrated recommendations to attain the goal of universalizing that capacity.



Also, recent experiences in developing countries have suggested that these countries wield a considerable market for services and products related to the use of geospatial data. That market remains, nevertheless, largely untapped, due to gaps in terms of awareness and capacity building. International cooperation in building up national capacity to use geospatial data can thus be expected to have a significant impact on the activities of companies developing and operating space based applications, increasing the demand for their services and products.

But a concerted international effort to create capacity, on the national level, to use geospatial data, would bear effects that would not be limited to the private sphere. Much has been discussed and done about the creation of Earth observation systems, both on the regional and global levels. The positive impact that the establishment of such systems would have on the human capacity to understand and deal with a range of global challenges has been extensively acknowledged. This is undoubtedly a most welcome endeavour, one to which the international community should continue to give its support.

A growing recognition has emerged, though, that the effectiveness of Earth observation systems in dealing with such global problems depends also on a consistent effort to integrate user communities on the country level into these systems, overcoming human, technological and institutional gaps hampering that goal. The implementation of regional or international Earth observation systems have, thus, a national dimension of its own, one which should elicit the recognition and the attention of COPUOS.

As a last point, the Committee might also wish to take stock of the activities undertaken within the UN system that are directly related to this important topic and consider ways to highlight the links existing amongst those activities and the means to give them a stronger international recognition.

A possible multi-year working plan for the discussions to be held under that new agenda item would be:

2007

- Presentations by Member States and Observers, regional/international organizations and informal coordination groups on their respective activities related to geospatial information for sustainable development. These could include UN Regional Centers for Space Science and Technology Education, GEO, CEOS, UNESCO, FAO, etc.

2008

- Expert presentations on experiences in the establishment of appropriate national infrastructure for geospatial data collection, processing and application, including human resource training, technical infrastructure and financial requirements, and institutional arrangements.
- Expert presentations on national capacity building activities and their impact on the international market for Earth observation services and applications.

2009

- Evaluation of the activities undertaken within the UN system that are directly related to the use of geospatial information for sustainable development and consideration of ways to highlight the links existing amongst those activities and the means to give them stronger international recognition.
- Drafting of a report containing recommendations on ways and means to foster international cooperation with a view to building up a national infrastructure to use geospatial data.