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Information needs and the global approach

Technical Forum

Conclusions and proposals of the Workshop on Geospatial Data Access

1. The Workshop on Geospatial Data Access addressed issues concerning direct access to Earth observation and related geospatial databases through the World Wide Web. It was noted that the provision of global geospatial information services required the adoption of standards and common interfaces for accessing catalogues and databases. As international standards matured, then national and regional infrastructures were increasingly able to interconnect into a truly global system.
2. The Workshop also considered the merging of three space technologies, global positioning systems, satellite digital data communications and Earth observation data, to satisfy the needs of resource and disaster management operations. Information was being created and exchanged through geographic information systems and transferred between mobile units in the field and central databases.
3. Geospatial data and other information were crucial to the effective resolution of problems at the local, national, subregional, regional and global levels. Many of those problems—poverty, natural disasters, desertification and deforestation, to name but a few—had no regard for international borders. Those problems required cooperation and sharing of infrastructure between agencies.
4. The participants of the Workshop recommended that action be taken:
 - (a) To recognize the importance of geospatial data and other information in resolving the important environmental, economic and social issues faced by humanity;
 - (b) To recognize the importance of and interaction between geospatial data and space technologies such as communications, Earth observation and geopositioning;
 - (c) To facilitate the development of fundamental and useful geospatial data in a form that could be used in many applications;
 - (d) To share geospatial data to the maximum extent possible. Metadata, in particular, should be made as freely available as possible;
 - (e) To engage industry in an appropriate way to collaborate in the development and implementation of spatial data infrastructure;

(f) To communicate, collaborate and participate in the many networks existing at the national, subregional, regional and global levels;

(g) To recognize the importance of training, transfer of technology and capacity-building in support of the management of the application of those technologies.

5. In conclusion, the Workshop encouraged the United Nations and space agencies to provide active support to the many initiatives aimed at developing geospatial data infrastructures (for example, the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure).
