



Side-event of Twentieth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC on the

Caribbean Geospatial Development Initiative - CARIGEO

April 08th, 2021

01:30 – 02:45 PM EDT Virtual

BACKGROUND

The Caribbean is a diverse region with significant economic potential and growth opportunities. Gross National Income per capita varies from around US\$800 to over US\$30,000. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted economic growth globally. The World Bank, in its June 2020 Global Economic Prospects report projected that the Caribbean economy is anticipated to contract by 1.8% in 2020, and by 3.1% excluding Guyana¹. The impending economic downturn, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the region's high debt burden and extreme vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, threatens the Caribbean's economic stability, social prosperity, and environmental sustainability.

Against this background, the Member States and Territories therefore need to implement development strategies that are agile, innovative, and applicable to respond, build back better and sustain their economies. Given the fact that policy and decisions rely on data, then it means that geospatial information and statistical data coupled with relevant digital technologies must be employed to inform these development priorities.

The Geospatial Readiness index for 2019 published by Geospatial Media and Communications ranks North America and Europe as first and second respectively across 75 countries. The index is a comparative framework that applies various parameters which evaluates the development of the geospatial sector and gives an insight on critical factors for the development of an integrated approach for geospatial management and contribution to socio-economic growth to achieve development objectives. The 2019 edition of the report grades the countries in the South America and the Caribbean group at a moderately low level of geospatial readiness, which is attributed to the absence of policy guidelines, a dearth of human resources, inadequate geospatial investments, and a weak geospatial industry. The report further states that “*a country that is geospatially ready is able to leverage geospatial information and technology for informed decision making, impact assessments, better monitoring and for achieving productivity and efficiency gains across all professional user domains*”. Further it says “*...countries that are geospatially prepared in terms of spatial data infrastructure, ...directly or indirectly tend to gain ... higher standards of living for citizens and high-quality infrastructure*”, as a close correlation can be made between the Readiness Index and UNDP's Human Development Index, the Global Competitiveness index, and the UN E-Government survey 2018. The forgoing analysis indicates that there is a great deal of work to be done to have the Caribbean bridge the existing geospatial divide, as they are being left behind.

Further to the foregoing, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development points out that “*quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data is needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision making.*” Supported by this global call to transform our world, and in response to the Caribbean's development and sustainability challenges, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management for the Americas (UN-GGIM: Americas) in collaboration with its partners (the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC), the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), geospatial private sector organizations, academic institutions and civil society representatives) have embarked on the CARIGEO initiative, under which this side event is being organized.

CARIGEO, is a collaborative initiative that seeks to empower the countries and territories of the Caribbean to advance the greater use and sharing of geospatial and statistical information to support improved decision making for sustainable national and regional development.

The CARIGEO initiative is being built on the gains of the “Project for the Strengthening of Spatial Data Infrastructures in Member States and Territories of the Association of Caribbean States” (Caribbean Project) sponsored by the Government of Mexico with support from the Association of Caribbean States and the University of the West Indies, Campus St. Augustine, between 2014 and 2018. Importantly the CARIGEO initiative was designed to be aligned with the regional spatial data infrastructure objectives and global frameworks, such as the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF), UNGEGN Resolution I/4 on National Standardization of Geographical Names, and the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for

¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD>
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/caribbean/overview>



Disasters (E/RES/2018/14), which should ensure that projects to be implemented will be fit-for-purpose within the context of the Caribbean's specific conditions.

The CARIGEO initiative is aligned with the objectives of the Aguascalientes Declaration, subscribed by UN-GGIM: Americas, AmeriGEO and other relevant regional organizations and initiatives, in terms working together to strengthen awareness, the participation of national experts and capacities across the region, particularly for the least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and middle income countries, in the benefits, use, management and dissemination of geospatial data to support national, regional and global development priorities.

The CARIGEO initiative also recognizes the need of strengthening capacities to integrate geospatial and statistical data and information, through the adoption of regional and global frameworks, standards and methodologies for evidence-based policies to address the 2030 Agenda and for generating disaggregated data to support COVID-19 management with a view in the territory.

OBJECTIVES

This Side Event is being staged to share knowledge and create awareness among the region's senior decision makers on the value of leveraging geospatial and statistical data with related technologies to support policy development and decision making. The Side Event also seeks to galvanize National Statistics Offices and National Geospatial Agencies of the Caribbean Member States and Territories to action and commitment to participate in CARIGEO. Attendees will learn about the CARIGEO initiative, its four overarching key objectives: 1) strengthening geospatial information management governance and policies, 2) creation of datasets and procurement and development of tools, 3) enhancing collaboration and partnerships and 4) capacity development, communication and engagement, and the importance of institutionalizing and incorporating geospatial information management in national development strategies.

PARTICIPANTS

The Side Event is targeted at the statistical community represented by the focal points of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (SCA-ECLAC). Technical geospatial staff from the National Statistics Offices as well as representatives from the regional geospatial community are also being invited to participate.

TOPICS

The issues to be addressed include:

1. The imperative to leverage geospatial data to accelerate change and support the Caribbean's development agenda.
2. The economic and social value of implementing geospatial initiatives.
3. Making available and accessible fundamental geospatial datasets.
4. Employing creative capacity building and resource retention measures to bridge geospatial skills and capacities gaps.
5. The value of collaboration, sharing and partnership under the framework of CARIGEO initiative.

FORMAT OF THE SIDE EVENT

This Side Event will be an hour and fifteen minutes. It will comprise four presentations to be delivered in a session of 45 minutes, followed by a 20-minute discussion segment.

The presentations and recordings will be made accessible on the ECLAC and UN-GGIM: America's websites a few days after the event.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

It is expected that at the end of the Side Event, senior government decisions makers and technical staff from both statistical and geospatial communities will know what is the CARIGEO initiative, its objectives, focus, main components and will be encouraged to make the commitment to actively participate. It is hoped that given the current pandemic and the shift towards digital investments, geospatial will be included in the national transformation and build back programs. Geospatial will be acknowledged as an enabler for governments and the private sector to stimulate collaboration and the sharing of data, to breaking down administrative silos and approach development by creating once and using many times, not only nationally but also regionally. It is expected that participants will leave recognizing and appreciating the importance of their roles in the implementation and use of geospatial information and technologies for their country's sustainable development.



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PRELIMINARY AGENDA

- Moderator** *Cecille Blake, UN Statistics Division, UN-GGIM Secretariat*
- 01:30 – 01:35** **Opening Remarks**
Paloma Merodio, President - UN-GGIM: Americas
- 01:35 – 01:45** **The integration of geospatial and statistical information – the value proposition**
Stefan Schweinfest, Director - UN Statistics Division
- 01:45 – 01:55** **The CARIGEO Initiative**
Michelle St. Clair, Land Surveyor - Lands and Surveys Department, Barbados
- 01:55 - 02:05** **Caribbean relevant climate change and disasters indicators for evidence-based sustainable development policies**
Ms. Pauline Leonard, Officer - Division of Program Planning and Operations - ECLAC Statistics Division
Ms. Lori-Rae Alleyne-Franklin, Chief - Anguilla Statistics Department (tbc)
- 02:05 - 02:15** **Tracking Sargassum in the Tropical Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. NOAA Data Collection Tools**
Dr. Joaquin Triñanes, Manager - Coast Watch Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico node, NOAA
- 02:15 – 02:25** **Geospatial/geostatistical information to support sustainable development strategies or priority issues.**
Juan Arturo García, Second Chief - National Geodesy and Hydrography Office, Republic of Cuba
- 02:25 - 02:40** **Discussion**
Moderated discussion
- 02:40 – 02:45** **Closing Remarks**
Rolando Ocampo, Director - ECLAC Statistics Division