

**CARIGEO Executive Forum
Concept Note**

“Geospatial a MUST for National Development”

**October 30th, 2020
10:00 – 11:30 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 absence of policy guidelines, dearth of human resources, inadequate geospatial investments and 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

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



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 forgoing, 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 Executive Forum, **“Geospatial a MUST for National Development”** 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, 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 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.

OBJECTIVES

This Executive Forum 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 Forum also seeks to galvanize countries to action and commitment to participate in CARIGEO, through focused high-level presentations that will highlight the geospatial development imperatives and good geospatial information management practices. Attendees will learn about the CARIGEO initiative, its four overarching key objectives of 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.

TARGETED PARTICIPANTS

The meeting is targeted at key decision makers in the industry and senior government officials, experts on geospatial related issues in academia, senior personnel of international and regional bodies and institutions, members of the donor community, and private sector companies.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

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 the geospatial drain and skills gap
5. The value of collaboration, sharing and partnership which is the CARIGEO initiative

FORMAT OF THE FORUM

This virtual forum will be an hour and a half, using the WebEx video conferencing platform. It will comprise four 15-minute presentations followed by a 30 minutes discussion segment. The Forum will be conducted in English.

The presentations and recordings will be made accessible on the UN-GGIM Americas website <http://www.un-ggim-americas.org/> a few days after the event.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

It is expected that at the end of the meeting senior government decisions makers 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 programmes. 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.