



Warning: UN Building Geospatial Data Ecosystem To Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

Geospatial technology tracks things that move (ie, people, vehicles, etc.) in the context of why they move and for what purpose. Technocrats seek to track everything in the world, all of the time, for the purpose of command and control over those things. This is the essence of the Science of Social Engineering that Technocracy purports to implement.

□ TN Editor

In today's age of globalization, countries are economically and socially entwined in unimaginable ways and technology lies at the core of this development. As technology becomes integrated into every aspect of our lives, geospatial information and technology is foreseen to be an enabler for developing coherent capabilities to meet the [Sustainable Development](#) Goals (SDGs). To foster economic growth and

development, to ease the process of monitoring and to incentivize the progress of the goals, a comprehensive understanding of the need for geospatial data ecosystem is vital. The exigency of spatial planning was realized when the ambitions set under the Millennium Development Goals could not be met. By precisely missing out on the principal approach of spatial information and technology, the MDGs were not effectively and efficiently tracked, monitored and managed. The stark obliviousness of different stakeholder entities on the use of geospatial information finally led to the incorporation of the same in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It's been a year and a half since the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, however, the understanding of the need *'to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including Earth observation and geospatial information'* to achieve the SDGs, is static. The stakeholder entities involved in decision making, creating roadmaps and creating and implementing action items for SDGs, continue to remain unenlightened by the many benefits geospatial information and earth observation data bring to the table. While global organizations such as the United Nations are recognizing the need of robust geographic data for strategic development, it is the development community and policymakers who need to be brought at par with the geospatial community to understand the relevance of geospatial data to formulate effective strategic action plans to meet the SDGs. **Aditya Aggarwal, Director, Data Ecosystems Development, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data**, states, *'Many of the issues that are being dealt with have an inherent spatial component, and this is becoming more and more realized across the different data communities to the extent where geospatial data is almost a fundamental trait in what is needed and how decisions get made.'*

Greg Scott, Inter-regional Advisor for Global Geospatial Information Management, United Nations, also emphasizes the critical role of geospatial industry in facilitating fruitful collaborations to assist governments, development agencies, multilateral agencies and commercial sector to pursue sustainable development goals through the use of geospatial information and knowledge. Stressing on the rising

expectation of citizens globally, Scott underlines the duty and role of the government and the geospatial industry to meet the development challenges with *'easily accessible and affordable geospatial technologies, digital transformation and innovation'*.

Clearly, an exhaustive geospatial data ecosystem is essential to the success of the sustainable development goals. A broad coalition of data sets, spatial and non-spatial in nature, is central to deriving insights and creating actionable plans. *'Measuring each country's progress towards the SDGs will require innovative approaches to collecting data. Data, as the basis for evidence-based decision making, will be critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda,'* comments **Scott**.

While the industry might be aware of the potential of geospatial information and technology, it is the change makers and policymakers who have to persistently be introduced to the value of dynamic visualizations created by the integration of data sources. It is when the development community understands that the geospatial information provides an accurate and reliable picture of the critical challenges facing the earth, such as climate change, food security, and natural disasters, among many others - will there be a quantum leap in how sustainable development goals are implemented, monitored and tracked. As **Nigel Clifford, CEO, Ordnance Survey, United Kingdom**, puts it, *'When geospatial data is visualized as a map and has attribution added to it and/or information layered on top, complex issues are understood within seconds.'*

Anne Hale Miglarese, CEO, Radiant, further adds, that geospatial technology allows nations to map and analyze the *'ecological and social footprints of humanity on the Earth's surface'*, thus developing an understanding and managing the impact of humans on earth. In agreement is **Barbara Ryan, Secretariat, Group on Earth Observations**, emphasizing on data revolution for building a sustainable world, *'A digital and data revolution is sweeping the globe, creating remarkable opportunities to connect, improve, and use data and evidence to inform action that can offer unprecedented levels of impact.'*

Building a geospatial data ecosystem

However, it is unlikely that development of this unprecedented level can be achieved without collaboration. Geospatial data, or integration of spatial and non-spatial datasets, cannot be achieved without a global multi-stakeholder partnership, especially with respect to SDGs. To this end, it is but necessary that a synergy is developed, and reshaped to formulate a geospatial 'data ecosystem' - involving the users, producers, beneficiaries and owners of data. Particularly in the case of Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative that meaningful partnerships are developed to ensure that the geospatial data revolution reaches the grassroots and is actionable at all levels. *'Only building an interconnected data ecosystem will allow states to properly plan for SDGs implementation, measure progress towards the Global Goals and compare themselves to others,'* **Scott** adds.

[Read full story here...](#)