

Task Group 2 Remote Sensing November 2007 Progress Report

Objectives

During 2007, an effort was made by the co-chairs in collaboration with the UNGIWG Secretariat to re-vitalize the Remote Sensing Task Group after it in 2006 did not produce significant output as a group. This was successful and resulted in new common activities, priorities and members.

Based on two teleconference meetings (30 May and 5 June, see attached minutes from meeting) and input via e-mail, the RS TG members jointly identified the following objectives for 2007 and 2008:

1. To review RS TG membership to ensure those included are (still) relevant. Seek to include new members to ensure widest possible buy-in and new ideas from UN colleagues
2. To suggest global thematic sub-layers for inclusion in common UN layer in Google Earth. Each UN agency with an interest to propose two sub-layers. This will be co-ordinated by Geo3D discussion group
3. To provide regular input as a group on areas of priority for populating with very high resolution imagery to Google Earth
4. To regularly discuss issues of joint interest to the RS TG and ensure UNGIWG acts as a common UN voice representing RS TG member organizations on these issues
5. To develop UNGIWG RS TG wiki-mechanism as a common collaborative tool to include information on
 - a. Available image purchase mechanisms for UN agencies
 - b. List of who in RS TG is involved in what tasks in GEO
 - c. Available free medium and high resolution imagery to UN agencies. Data proposed hosted at UNOSAT
 - d. Co-ordination mechanism for access to imagery for emergency preparedness and response
 - e. Lessons learned and capacity overview information on the use of remote sensing within the UN family

Task Group Membership

After an update of the previous individual membership list and addition of new members, the Task Group now has 42 members and is headed by Einar Bjorgo (UNITAR-UNOSAT). Of particular importance is an increased interest and willingness for contribution to the RS TG from UN field offices, specifically OCHA, UNHCR, FAO and WFP.

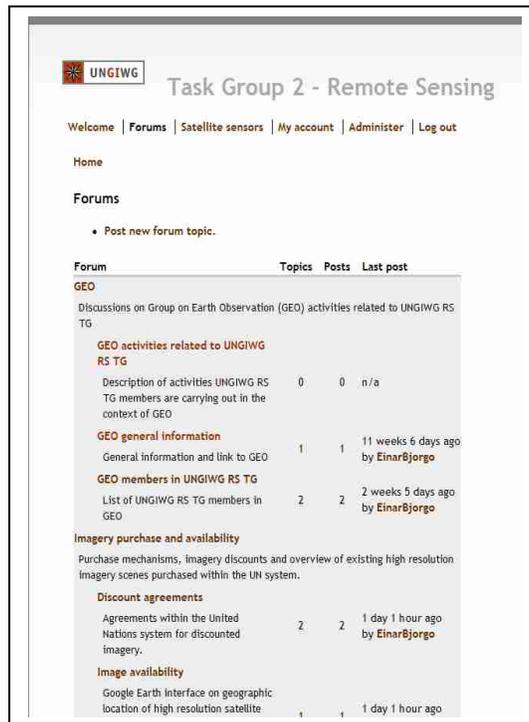
As during last year, serious spam-problems with the Task Group e-mail listserv (rs@ungiwg.org) limit the usability of this tool. The TG Chair is working to solve this with the UNGIWG Secretariat and OCHA. New settings have been implemented by OCHA, which should solve this problem.

Final report

List of Tasks

Significant progress on the above-mentioned five topics have been made:

1. Task Group membership has been reviewed and now includes new members while some members no longer within the UN system or no longer following RS TG issues were deleted from the list.
2. The issue of a common UN layer in Google Earth is still under discussion within Google Earth. A proposal for such a layer has been brought forward by the Geo3D discussion group.
3. Input has been provided to Google Earth regarding areas of priority, and some areas have indeed been populated with QuickBird imagery on Google Earth. However, a more structured approach for this should be advocated within the UN system. The RS TG is one group that can be used to put forward such requests under a common UN umbrella.
4. Discussions of common interest have taken place at teleconferences and through e-mail. It is also foreseen that the recently initiated RS TG Wiki mechanism will contribute to such discussions. It is important that the views expressed represent those of the organization which the member represents. Several members see value of the Wiki mechanism for common discussions as supposed to the e-mail list server.
5. The Wiki mechanism has recently (early November) been released for testing by the RS TG. Since this is a work in progress only parts of the foreseen content has already been included (points 5 a, b, c are currently addressed). However, it is foreseen that it will include all the above (5 d and e) as well as more forums and topics as needed. Included in the Wiki is also a mechanism for ensuring access to the RS TG members and UN community on the geographical location of very high resolution imagery already purchased by UN agencies. This information can potentially also be made available to Member States. Several of the purchased scenes come with UN wide licenses and so this mechanism is intended to reduce costs within the system and avoid duplication of efforts and multiple purchase of the same scenes. Below is an example from the Wiki (currently in testing phase).



Final report

Input from UN field offices

With recent input from several UN field offices (OCHA, UNHCR, FAO and WFP) to the work of the RS TG in 2007, their specific comments are summarized below:

- Field support towards RS TG advocating for online web mapping services for inclusion of specific remote sensing data on client side, allowing users to process imagery from remote
- RS TG solution on feature for UN field offices allowing to draw area of interest and query for available data and logging area of interest as order
- Allowing for remote sensing derived products (baseline GIS layers such as damage extents, points of interest (destroyed bridges, roads), clipped geo-referenced imagery for back drops etc.
- Advocating for production of easy to use A4 greyscale maps and atlases for field use
- Strong support for Google Earth interface of available very high resolution imagery to UN community
- Strong support for coordination of populating Google Earth with very high resolution imagery over areas of specific interest to UN field offices
- RS TG to work closely with UNSDI initiative to ensure data access in standard formats, in particular timely imagery derived data
- Working with imagery data in the field is less useful due to file size and expertise needed for analysis, this is a lessons learned for the RS TG to consider
- RS TG should foster closer communication from the field in order to further improve the use of remote sensing data

Activities for 2008

The following activities for 2008 were agreed at the UNGIWG 8 Plenary Meeting in Bangkok 28-20 November 2007:

1. Focus on facilitating access to information and RS data, including derived data, to field actors through interoperable systems.
2. Further increase involvement of UN field actors in RS TG as recent positive developments have indicated a strong interest for this. Identified as a specific priority for the RS TG in 2008.
3. Active use of Wiki by RS TG members, including new forums and topics as needed.
4. Populate database on available very high resolution imagery using GeoNetwork standard and then converting to Google Earth files for easy access of information.
5. Continue to put forward areas of common interest for populating Google Earth with very high resolution imagery.
6. Responses to sudden onset disasters have seen a strong increase in terms of remote sensing within the UN (Space Charter and other mechanisms). Specific discussion forum on Wiki to put forward common UN needs and positions. Continued awareness raising of opportunities from the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters" Charter and mechanisms in place to ensure imagery derived maps are disseminated on a timely basis to UN agencies.