



# ISO/TC 211

Geographic information/Geomatics

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## Newsletter August 2022

*Members and liaisons of ISO/TC 211, geospatial colleagues,*

This is my first newsletter since beginning my 3-year term as chair of ISO/TC 211 at the start of this year.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ms Agneta Angberg, my predecessor, who saw us through a complex few years adjusting to fully hybrid meetings as our various countries and organizations responded to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In that she worked closely with our Committee Manager, Mats Åhlin, and I'm very pleased that Mats is continuing in that role – he has certainly made it easier for me to get started.

We are more than six months in to my first year, and we have already had our first formally hybrid plenary week, ably hosted by our Austrian members in the excellent facilities of Wien Digital.

In this newsletter you can read a short report on that meeting and our upcoming hybrid meeting hosted in Stockholm, Sweden, in December 2022. You can also read about UN-GGIM 12 in New York earlier this month and about our involvement with ISO's modernization programme.



## 2022 Plenary Meetings



I've been reminded by a couple of people that my predecessors generally published a news item after an ISO/TC 211 plenary – and that although we're now three months after our May 2022 plenary this would still be useful. It was the first one officially run as what ISO calls "hybrid" with about 40 people nicely hosted in Vienna and perhaps 100 joining one or more meetings via Zoom, some at very awkward times of day and night. That covered 25 countries and 12 liaison organizations. As usual about twenty working and advisory groups met during the week running up to the actual plenary.

To be fair to those not present in the room, we only took decisions on simple resolutions during the meeting, with the others being run as Committee Internal Ballots; see [Resolutions \(iso.org\)](https://www.iso.org/publications/R09093.html). Most of the plenary meeting consisted of informative presentations: from ISO on changes to some procedures and from fifteen TC 211 groups; the full slide deck at [TC 211/N 5748](https://www.iso.org/standard/7548.html) (log in required) contains a report on OGC as well.

We are less than four months away from our next meeting where the physical meeting will be hosted in Stockholm, Sweden from 5th to 9th December 2022. Registration is already open on the ISO Meetings portal. We intend to improve the experience for those attending remotely, so it will be really helpful to have an early indication of who will be in Stockholm and who will call in so that we can try to schedule meetings accordingly.



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We also have a consultation (Committee Internal Ballot) open to consider how best to meet in 2023 and beyond. It will remain open to the end of August; if you have a view and haven't seen the consultation, contact your national standards body (or liaison organization) who will be coordinating responses.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Information Management (UN-GGIM 12)



It was not only enjoyable but even more valuable than I expected to attend the [12th session](#) of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geospatial Information ([UN-GGIM](#)), at which ISO/TC 211 is a recognized observer.

An official UN visitor had apparently expected to find "sixty old men", and no doubt she could find them among the 256 participants from 73 countries plus 111 observers: not all old and not all men! In fact, in the opening session, there were more women than men at the 'top table': all three co-chairs for the past year being women. Three of us attended from ISO/TC 211 along with others from OGC and IHO.

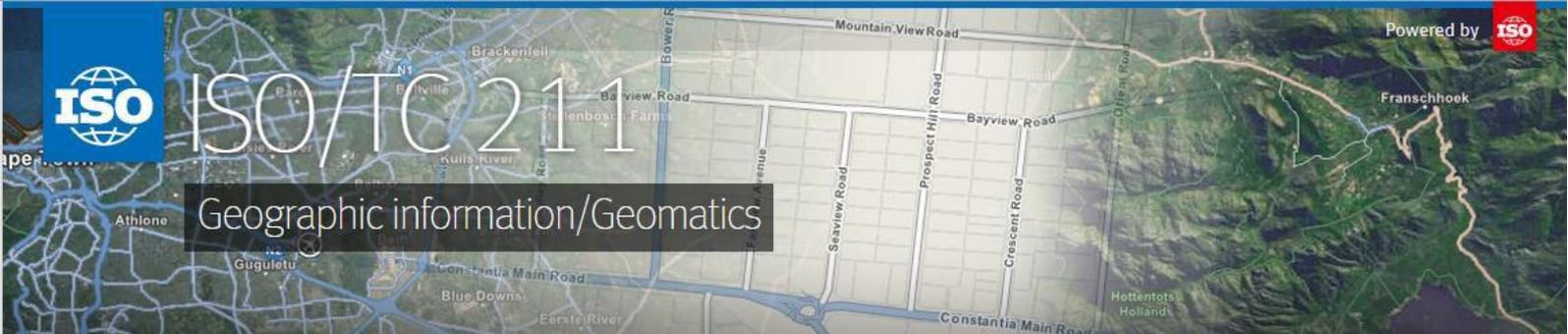
In addition to the formal sessions, there were 33 [side events](#) which can be more interactive, including one focused on standards: [Bringing Land & Sea Together](#). It was great to hear a dozen or more supportive "interventions" on our [standards report](#), including a couple of specific challenges for us to work on: giving actual examples of geo standards supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), and embedding EPSG codes in the ISO Geodetic Registry (which is already planned).

Here are some of my other highlights; things I enjoyed hearing more about:

- Work of UN-GGIM Regional Committees: we are already engaged quite well with Asia-Pacific and the America; the week provided opportunity to explore more how we can engage with groups in Europe and Arab States
- The "High level group" working on the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework ([IGIF](#)) including progress on national plans with varied reports from Fiji, Germany, Nepal, UK.
- The [SDG Data Alliance](#) looking at data to support the Sustainable Development Goals
- The [2nd World Geospatial Information Congress](#) where a joint TC 211/OGC/IHO paper has already been accepted for presentation
- Integration of geospatial and statistics
- UN-GGIM work on land administration and disaster management
- The "Geospatial Knowledge Infrastructure" concept
- Does the "metaverse" need a "geoverse"? The group decided no: "while interesting at the conceptual level, (the concept of the 'geoverse') is not the right definition for the future geospatial ecosystem"

Opportunities and challenges for ISO/TC 211 and its experts:

- Engage formally with the Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence as it becomes established



- Digital Twins, where we will work with OGC and WGIC to document the existing geo standards that can support these initiatives
- The [One United Nations Geospatial Situation Room](#) which seeks to be based on standards
- Help to bridge the 'digital divide' by getting involved in capacity development e.g. providing course content or running workshops
- [Women in Geospatial](#) called for inspiring women to be profiled as an encouragement to get more women involved in geo. In ISO/TC 211, we certainly have some inspiring women, it would be good to get them (you!) profiled on Women in Geospatial's LinkedIn page.
- UN-GGIM will open two 'centres' this year, which will have opportunities for international staff placements which were described as particularly useful for younger people. These will be in China (geospatial knowledge & innovation) and Bonn (geodesy)
- Further strengthen our links with UNGGIM Regional Committees
- Engage with the UN-GGIM work on integrating geospatial and statistical standards

There is of course a lot of value in the conversations you can have outside the meetings, with delegations from India, Saudi Arabia, the Subcommittee on Geodesy, Eurogeographics, The Place Trust, and many others.

For more detail, you can watch unedited live video of the main meetings; we were fortunate enough to have simultaneous translation of the Spanish, Arabic, and French contributions – which isn't (yet) on the videos. All the videos are at [UNSD – UN-GGIM](#), with the most relevant bits to ISO/TC 211 perhaps being:

- Discussion of the standards bodies' report: 4th meeting from 1:15 to 1:46
- Geodetic reference framework: 2nd meeting, from 2:17 to the end, resuming in 3rd meeting for 32 minutes
- Land administration: 3rd meeting, from 1:28 to 2:06.

## ISO modernization

Note: I don't think ISO formally recognizes these things as a programme, but we do see them as a range of activities which modernize the standards development process.

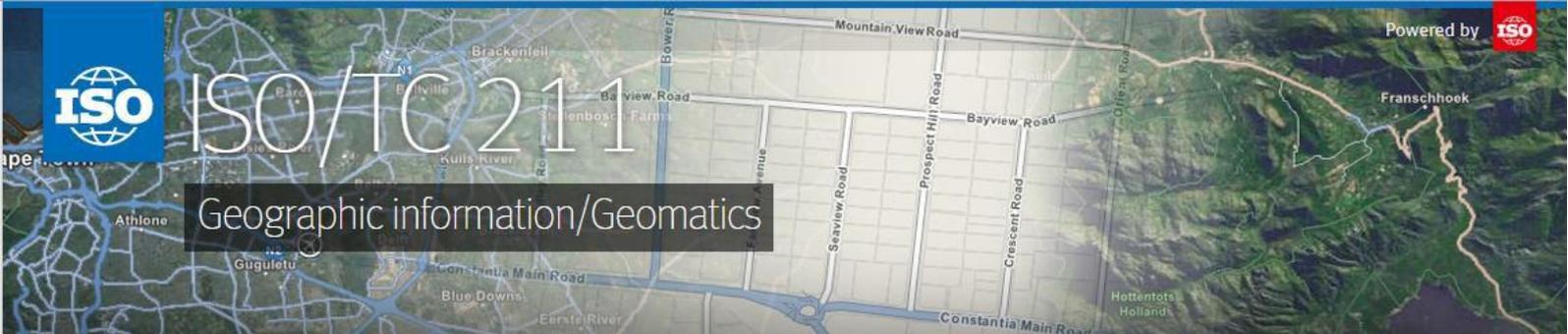
ISO/TC 211 is pleased to have several pilot projects working with the new [Online Standards Development Platform](#). The project teams have found it a productive way to work collaboratively on drafting a new or revised document. We intend to run a session where some of those who have been using the tool can share their experience in more



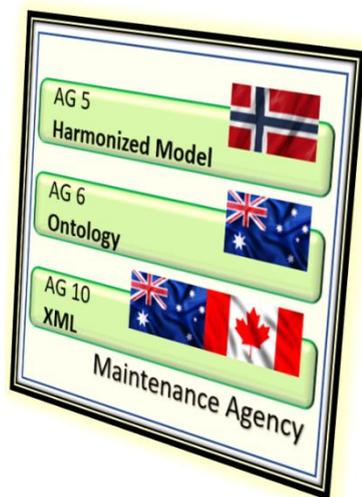
detail – but remember it is currently under development, and they have been feeding ideas back into the team developing the tool.

We should soon have our first Committee Draft consultation in which our members can submit their comments directly into the tool. This will exercise a different aspect of this new approach to collaboration.

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We have submitted four ideas into the **ISO SMART** User Cases group who are working through them and eight from other committees to get a better idea of the range of ways that ISO standards could be 'machine applicable readable, and transferable' to better support implementation. Our online multi-lingual glossary on [Geolexica](#) has already been accepted by the ISO SMART technical solution group as a good working example. The other three use cases that we put forward concern providing XML, UML models, and machine readable code lists.



**Harmonized Resource Maintenance Agency**; as announced in April, ISO have recognized the way we manage our 'resources for implementation' as worth continuing at least until they have developed the wider plan for 'standards that are machine applicable readable, and transferable'.

We understand that ISO appreciates our input on these things, seeing us now as a forward looking committee.

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[ISO/TC 211 LinkedIn page](#)

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