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[Home](#) > Political commitment & technology key to addressing Africa's geospatial challenges, says Chinganya

Political commitment & technology key to addressing Africa's geospatial challenges, says Chinganya

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 22, 2017 (ECA) – The AfricaGIS 2017 conference continued in Addis Ababa Wednesday with Director, Oliver Chinganya, of the ECA's African Centre for Statistics, reminding delegates that addressing geospatial information coordination challenges in Africa requires the promotion of advancement in science and technology supported and backed by political commitment.

Speaking at the opening of the Third Meeting of the Regional Committee on the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management in Africa (UN-GGIM: Africa), Mr. Chinganya said it's only with engagement at high political commitment that experts will ensure impactful change on the ground.

He told delegates; "Perhaps, the burning question we need to address is how we arouse the interest among policymakers of this initiative; how do we establish an effective national leadership to steer the process and contribute to the implementation of the activities outlined in the Action Plan of UN-GGIM: Africa?"

"I am informed that Africa is the first region all over the world that has developed a plan. This is laudable but action is required in implementing the plan."

He said the meeting was expected to make solid recommendations and a check-list of desirable actions that will guarantee that Africa follows the course in moulding policy that is suited to African issues.

The meeting is a follow-up of several other meetings held in the past as part of a platform for member States' representatives to present, discuss and share experiences on issues and challenges regarding geospatial information management in Africa.

The ECA is the Secretariat of UN-GGIM: Africa and its endeavor is to provide regional focus in facilitating geospatial information activities in Africa.

"It is recognized, that the major impediments to building geospatial information infrastructure is institutional and organizational. This includes the inability to bring countries to work together and learn from each other in order to promote collaboration on the development of regional and global spatial data infrastructure standards," said Mr. Chinganya.

The ECA Director said progress in improving the availability and accessibility of global geospatial information will depend on how well countries cooperate with each other. Hence, promoting international cooperation in institutional strengthening and knowledge transfer as well

as in capacity development was essential.

In actively taking the role of leading Africa's efforts in the Global Geospatial Information Management initiative, the ECA aims to enable and encourage linkages with international programs and initiatives, thereby providing oversight and advisory inputs for building a systemic and comprehensive coordination framework.

"We consider that the task of implementing geospatial information management must be undertaken as a collective effort, not by one country or one sub-region. It is for these reasons that UN-GGIM: Africa was established to ensure that it involves all stakeholders collectively," said Mr. Chinganya.

Experts from the geospatial world and representatives of member States, among others, are attending the meeting.

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