

IWG-SEM Meeting

Minutes

ICF Conference Center, Fairfax

10-11/10/2013

List of Attendees

	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Notes
1	Noriko	Aso	JAXA	
2	Nick	Behnken	PDC	2nd day, morning session
3	Lorant	Czaran	UNOOSA/UN-SPIDER	
4	Stuart	Frye	NASA	
5	Fabio	Giulio Tonolo	ITHACA	
6	Jan	Kucera	EC-JRC	
7	Tobias	Schneiderhan	DLR-ZKI	Remotely - 1st day, morning session
8	Nate	Smith	GWU	
9	Stefan	Voigt	DLR-ZKI	Remotely - 2nd day, morning session
10	Lu	Jing	GWU	Graduate Student Observer

Main Outcomes

The meeting starts with a formal thank to Nate Smith (GWU) for his precious support in finding a back-up venue for the meeting (and supporting the attendees logistics) which was required due to the unavailability of the original hosting institution (DOI/USGS) caused by the US federal government shutdown. The group thanks also Brenda Jones (USGS) for the effort spent in preparing the meeting until the shutdown started.

Furthermore it is noted that - for the same aforementioned reason - the presentation from US based institution (non IWG-SEM members) will not be held, while the ones focused on NASA and PDC (IWG-SEM members) activities are confirmed. The agenda is re-arranged accordingly.

The main topics of the meeting are introduced, specifically:

- an updating on the IWG-SEM activities (new members, web-site and invitation from GDACS);
- the finalization of the emergency mapping guidelines;
- the proposed technical solution to broadcast data/metadata of ongoing/past emergency activations (GeoRSS);
- the IWG-SEM potential next activities, including the potential venue for the next meeting scheduled for April 2014.

IWG-SEM activities updating

Fabio Giulio Tonolo (ITHACA) provides a brief update on the following topics.

New members

The new members that joined IWG-SEM since the last meeting in Torino are briefly introduced, specifically: Antje Sibert from Subsecretaría de Bosques de Chubut (SsBCh), Rashid Kashif from UN World Food Programme (UNWFP), Josh Lyons from Human Right Watch (HRW). All the new members preliminarily confirmed to fulfill the agree IWG-SEM membership policy.

Web-Site

After a discussion on the web-site content updating, it is agreed to list (in the “Participants” section) all the entities which are currently in the IWG-SEM mailing list and not only the members which are actively participating to the group activities (monthly teleconferences, meetings and emergency mapping guidelines drafting). The entities long names will be used (and not only the acronym/short name), furthermore the link to the relevant web-sites will be removed (to avoid updating and wrong redirection issues). It is also proposed to add a disclaimer in the home page, informing that IWG-SEM is not supposed to perform emergency mapping activities for a specific event, and in case of similar needs it is advised to refer to the relevant mechanisms web-sites. The proposal should be further analyzed and discussed.

Invitation to the GDACS annual meeting

The IWG-SEM group has been formally invited to the GDACS annual meeting with the goal to provide the group vision on the sharing of relevant information related to emergency mapping activations. It is highlighted that the group replied positively to the request, asking a clarification on: 1) the possibility for more than one IWG-SEM representative to attend, in case this would allow to better address the GDACS request 2) if the invitation is focused only on a specific technical session or on the two days meeting. The group has been informed that IWG-SEM is invited to attend both days of the meeting, while it is preferred that one representative (possibly the chair) participate (due to the need to carefully balance the attendees group).

It is discussed and agreed that IWG-SEM will present the main points of the information sharing principles expressed in the draft guidelines, specifically:

- the information sharing on ongoing emergency mapping activations should be mainly aimed at SEM organizations and it is seen as a horizontal cooperation (not coordination) tool, allowing to clearly understand where SEM organization are currently active. Anyway, the tool could be potentially useful also for the user community, allowing to know if any mechanism has already been triggered for a specific event/AOI.
- it should be focused on the area of interest and not only on the satellite imagery footprints (as stated in the invitation letter).
- IWG-SEM is working to define a minimum set of standard metadata
- IWG-SEM is proposing as technical solution GeorSS feeds (which should be managed and broadcasted by each SEM organization which should already have the capabilities to do so) since they are already a standard and OGC compliant, everyone can subscribe to a specific feed using both not specialized (e.g. Microsoft Outlook, Mozilla Thunderbird) exploiting only the textual information (RSS) and specialized (e.g. ArcGIS, QGIS) software packages, taking advantage of the geospatial component. The feeds should be automated and open.
- IWG-SEM is proposing that a centralized web-page aimed at displaying the GeorSS feeds broadcasted by the SEM organizations should be developed and be publicly accessible (sensitive activations will obviously not being broadcasted)
- IWG-SEM is proposing that the aforementioned web-page could be hosted in the “Data, Maps & Satellite Imagery” section of the GDACS web-site, which seems to be a good-fitting solution, and is willing to cooperate with GDACS on this topic (alternative back-up solutions have already been identified).

Emergency Mapping Guidelines finalization

The current version of the emergency mapping guidelines has been thoroughly reviewed by the attendees with the goal to address the comments raised so far by the IWG-SEM members, in order to define the group position and the action list with the main tasks required for the guidelines finalization.

Generally, it is agreed to keep the guidelines as concise and synthetic as possible, providing general guidelines, avoiding to impose strict rules although suggesting solutions and referencing best practices (e.g. the UNOCHA Humanitarian symbols wrt the Map template section). Development and definition of more precise standards (e.g. symbology, terminology, filenaming conventions) has been also discussed, and it is agreed to list these topics in the potential next IWG-SEM activities.

Concerning the document structure, it is agreed to use the current structure for the working document, while in the final stage it will be decided if Annexes are required and, in case, which parts/sections should be moved there.

It is agreed that the main audience of the guidelines should be SEM organizations, although they may be useful also for different target groups, such as EM users (which will have a better understanding of the content/limits of emergency mapping products) as well as satellite data provider.

Furthermore it is highlighted that some of the proposed guidelines are related to the classical static maps concept (e.g. file naming, raster formats) but it should also be stressed the importance to consider new trends in the emergency mapping field (on-line dynamic maps).

Concerning the section 2.3.2 (Levels of interaction), it is highlighted that it should be discussed how to operationally share the current status/level of the different SEM organizations.

As far as the quality assurance section is concerned, it is discussed and agreed to keep a softer approach for the time being, providing general guidelines as well as a quality check list which could be used by the SEM organizations for an objective self-assessment of their quality level. The quality check list should include also the need to get feedback from the users on the delivered SEM products. The quality certification tests, which should be managed by the IWG-SEM group, are anyway considered important and the topic is inserted in the list of potential next IWG-SEM activities. The use of the IWG-SEM logo in SEM products is encouraged if the SEM organization adhere to the EM guidelines and especially to the Quality assurance section, but it should not be seen as a “quality stamp”.

Timeline

At the end of the meeting the following timeline for the actions related to the Emergency Mapping Guidelines finalization is agreed, taking into account that a ready-to-be-distributed version (v1.0) of the document should be ready by the end of the year:

- November 15, 2013: version for internal commenting (to the IWG-SEM active members)
- November 30, 2013: version for final proof-reading/editing (to USGS)
- December 15, 2013: version for final reading (to DG ENTR + DG ECHO)
- December 31, 2013: v 1.0 version to be distribute to specialized communities for commenting (e.g. UNGIWG mailing list).

Action list

The following actions have been identified (the responsible organizations are listed in brackets). Contribution from other IWG-SEM members are obviously welcome.

- To provide a new version of the Guidelines, including the minor editing/restructuring agreed during the meeting, to be used as common base for the major editing (Fabio Giulio Tonolo/ITHACA) – November 1, 2013
- To finalize the common terminology/glossary drafted during the Geneva meeting, in order to check the consistency of the terms used in the entire document (Jan Kucera/JRC) – November 15, 2013
- To restructure the introduction taking into account the comments raised so far (Nate Smith/GWU) – November 15, 2013
- To restructure the “Quality Assurance” section according to the agreed approach (Tobias Schneiderhan/DLR) – November 15, 2013
- To restructure the “Sharing” section, including the “Reference layer” part and removing the “Current status” sub-section” which should not be present in a guideline document (Noriko Aso/JAXA) – November 15, 2013
- To check the availability of Bob Brackeridge (DFO) to finalize the flood section and investigate potential alternative contributors in case it will be required (Fabio Giulio Tonolo/ITHACA) – October 25, 2013

GeoRSS feeds related to emergency mapping activations

In addition to the general discussion on the purpose of sharing information on ongoing emergency mapping activations among SEM organizations (refer to the “Invitation to the GDACS annual meeting” section of the minutes), Jan Kucera (JRC) provided a demonstration on the GeoRSS feeds currently broadcasted in the framework of the Copernicus Emergency Mapping Service. In addition to a general feed showing ongoing and past activations of the service (event approximate location as point features), the feed related to each activation (and to each map product of the activation) are shown, highlighting the possibility to display the geographical information (AOIs as polygon features) as well as the relevant metadata into Google Maps.

The minimum set of metadata which is proposed (to be further analyzed, using as starting point the outcomes of the Geneva meeting) is:

- AOI geometry
- type of analysis (e.g. delineation, damage grading)
- type of sensor (radar/optical) and resolution category

IWG-SEM potential next activities

The following topics - discussed during the meeting - are deemed relevant for IWG-SEM vision and mission and will be considered for the potential next activities to be carried out by the group as soon as the guidelines will be finalized:

- SEM community analysis: analysis of the SEM big picture, including definition of specific end users categories and use cases, which will help to delineate the IWG-SEM role more clearly;
- Quality assurance: to proceed further with the quality assurance guidelines, analyzing the possibility to set-up SEM organization qualification tests and the role IWG-SEM may have;

- Sharing of user feedback: it is stressed the importance of gathering the user feedback on the delivered SEM products, highlighting the difficulties in receiving detailed and useful information. For this reason, an analysis of the main outcomes/findings based on the received user feedback from the different SEM organizations should be carried out and shared;
- Development of a standard mapping symbology;
- Development of a file naming convention or standard.
- To promote the IWG-SEM activities (action: make available standard presentation of IWG-SEM on the web-site).

Next meeting

An informal discussion on potential venues for the next Spring meeting (approximately April 2014) is held: UNOOSA and DLR will investigate the possibility to host the meeting in Europe, furthermore UNOOSA is also offering the possibility to organize the meeting close to the UNGIWG meeting which will be held at the UN facility in New York in May 2014 (to be confirmed). PDC declare its availability to host the meeting. It is agreed to preliminary check the availability of the IWG-SEM members in terms of dates as well as venues (i.e. realistic possibilities to travel oversea).

Partners presentations

Fabio Giulio Tonolo (ITHACA) gives a short presentation on IWG-SEM.

Stuart Frye (NASA) gives a presentation on the “NASA support for DRM under the CEOS”

Nick Behnken (PDC) demonstrates the functionalities of the EMOPS portal.

The slides will be uploaded on the IWG-SEM web-site



Photo Credit Jing Lu, GWU