



GRID-Geneva Quarterly Bulletin No. 3

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Global Resource Information Database-Geneva

Regional Coordination facilitated through "Euro-GRID '99" Meeting

The second consecutive annual meeting of the European GRID Centres "Euro-GRID '99" was held in Budapest, Hungary, on 5-7 September, with the Regional Coordinator participating along with representatives of five of the other six European GRID offices. The "Euro-GRID" Meetings, the first of which was initiated at and hosted by GRID-Geneva in November 1998, are organised for the purposes of exchanging information, coordinating plans and discussing such key topics as a Europe-wide GRID network strategy. Hosted on this occasion by GRID-Budapest, the two days of discussion allowed for an exchange of information and views on the critical issues (early warning, fresh water, conflict mapping as well as such topics as strategy and pricing policy for products and services) among the six centres assembled. A visit to GRID-Budapest and a more detailed view of their operations within the Hungarian Ministry of Environment, their national networks and applications of the latest information/WWW technology, was also arranged by the host and director of GRID-Budapest, Mr. Pal Bozo.

One significant decision taken at the meeting was to begin as soon as possible a joint project among multiple European GRID centres in the realm of conflict mapping, early warning of "hot spots" and/or "Cities SoE on-line", in order to give a more tangible dimension to Euro-GRID centre collaboration, and to take advantage of complementary strengths (in terms of skills and resource levels) among the different centres. A final report of "Euro-GRID '99" is being jointly

prepared, and will be posted as soon as completed at GRID-Geneva's website. ?

Ron Witt, Regional Coordinator

Three maps for the Gharm, Shartuz, and Kulyab regions of Tajikistan were created by GRID-Geneva at a scale of 1:300,000 using Adobe Illustrator and ESRI Arc/Info.



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GIS Database for Tajikistan

Under a contractual agreement signed in July 1999, GRID-Geneva was commissioned by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), to develop databases and prepare maps of three regions in Tajikistan under its "Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Programme".

Working intensively to meet the two-month deadline, GRID-Geneva staff were able to successfully complete the work and formally handed over to UNOPS on 31 August a set of GIS Databases for the regions of Gharm, Kulyab and Shartuz in Tajikistan. These databases include large-scale (1:1,000,000) information on topography, hydrology, political boundaries, inhabited places, transport infrastructure,

location of various offices and programmes, etc.

The GIS-compatible spatial database was provided to UNOPS on a CD-ROM accompanied with a technical report and a series of large-scale colour maps of the aforementioned regions. The GRID-Geneva developed GIS database is intended to form the cornerstone of a planned GIS unit to be established by UNOPS field offices in Tajikistan, and which is intended to service sustainable development and local environmental management activities in that country. ?

Balkans Task Force Update

GRID-Geneva's Balkans Task Force (BTF) Information Unit continued its data collection and information dissemination activities, providing weekly status reports on the environmental and human settlement impacts of the conflict. The 24 Situation Reports so far prepared may be downloaded from GRID-Geneva's website (<http://www.grid.unep.ch/btf>). The BTF Info Officer, Diana Rizzolio, has also been compiling detailed background information packages to support the "technical environmental assessment missions" to Serbia and Kosovo. These BTF field missions have focused on

three main issues: (i) industrial hot spots, (ii) pollution of the Danube river, and (iii) the conflict's impact on local biodiversity. A "desk assessment" of possible health risks resulting from depleted uranium contamination has also been prepared. Concurrent to the ground missions, GRID-Geneva (P. Peduzzi) has been analyzing satellite images of Serbia obtained from the Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) satellite, Landsat TM and SPOT systems. Meanwhile, the BTF website has been regularly updated with reports and related graphical products and a



BTF Experts collecting soil samples at Novi Sad, Serbia.

new maps have also been prepared.

In further support of the BTF, GRID-Geneva is now consolidating the findings acquired over the past five months to assist in the preparation of a final report on the environmental impacts of the Balkans conflict, which is due for submission to the United Nations Secretary General in early October. ?

photo archive documenting the aftermath of the conflict has also been created. Maps of the conflict are regularly revised based on latest findings and

Progress on the CDS for Geneva Canton

In early 1999, the Department of Interior, Agriculture, Environment and Energy (DIAEE), Geneva Canton, Switzerland, commissioned GRID-Geneva to develop a Catalogue of Data Sources, identifying "who has what environmental information in Geneva and how to access it" (see Quarterly Bulletin #1). As a first step, information holders were identified and their contact addresses verified and subsequently incorporated in the updated version of CDS-Geneva. Concurrently, an online version of the CDS (called WebCDS) was installed on the Canton of

Geneva's Intranet. This was followed by a demonstration of the CDS product for various information suppliers involved in environmental meta-data activities by Mr. Frédéric Vogel of GRID-Geneva on 24 September 1999, during a meeting of the Technical Commission of the Environmental and Energy Information System for the Geneva Region (SIEnG). The WebCDS received much acclaim from the Technical Commission, emphasizing its utility for the timely location of environmental information.

In order to allow information suppliers the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the objects described in the CDS, a user-friendly inventory in Adobe PDF format has been prepared by GRID-Geneva for each data provider. The updated version of the Canton of Geneva's CDS is scheduled for release in late October 1999, and will then be opened to the public via the Canton of Geneva's Internet site. ?



<http://www.geneve.ch/>

GTOS Regional Meeting

GRID-Geneva was invited to present the GRID network and its activities to a "Regional Synthesis Workshop" convened by the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) Central/Eastern European programme. The Synthesis Workshop was convened to summarise the planning phase for the GTOS Programme in C/E Europe, prior to implementation of GTOS in the sub-region. As many of the goals and priorities of UNEP/GRID and GTOS are similar, there is a good likelihood that

efficiencies could be achieved by the two programmes working together, not only in C/E Europe, but elsewhere as well.

GTOS is sponsored by FAO, ICSU, UNEP, UNESCO and WMO, and addresses the following major issues: changes in land quality; freshwater resources; loss of biodiversity; climate change impacts; and pollution and toxicity. The C/E European area is one of three pilot sub-regions (along with southern Africa and southeastern Asia)

for GTOS, which focuses on linking existing terrestrial observing networks in order to improve data exchange, harmonisation and access to information for users, and to provide improved environmental monitoring data and better calibration of wide-coverage remotely-sensed data collected by global satellite systems.

Potential linkages between the GRID network and GTOS' sub-regional programme were also highlighted, including collaboration on data dissemination,

meta-databases and thematic priorities of both networks (e.g., biodiversity, fresh water and land quality). The full report of the GTOS C/E Europe "Regional Synthesis Workshop" will be made available at FAO's website. ?

For more information visit: <http://www.fao.org/gtos>

Mediterranean/West Asian Activities

Preparations for the project on 'Capacity Building in GIS and remote sensing: a coastal information system for Lebanon' have been on-going. In July 1999, Barbara Bierhuizen and Jean-Michel Jaquet of GRID-Geneva undertook a mission to Lebanon to establish formal contacts with the various partners of the project. The main issues discussed were the selection of the pilot area, data availability, in-house experience, human resource requirements and methodology of work. From this visit several conclusions

were drawn of which the most promising is to link the project with the soon-to-be-established 'Lebanese Environment and Development Observatory' (LEDO) within the Ministry of Environment. Creation of the Observatory stems from the need for an extensive environmental information base for Lebanon. One of the main functions of the LEDO would be to collect and co-ordinate environmental information as well as socio-economic and institutional data. During the mission it was also decided to formulate a more

detailed proposal for the project. This proposal has been developed and is currently being reviewed by potential Lebanese and other partner organisations. The initial concept of mapping land-based sources of marine pollution has been expanded to include the creation of a coastal information system to assist in the management of the coastal zone. This would not only serve LEDO's objectives, but would as well respond to UNEP's programme on land-based sources of marine pollution.

One of the first activities for the project will be to conduct a test exercise with a subset of Landsat TM imagery, available through the National Centre for Remote Sensing, to establish if Landsat imagery can be used to map land-derived marine pollution within the Lebanese context. The use of other types of satellite imagery is also under investigation. ?

New Website introducing the Alpine CDS and Related Complementary Tools

A new website for the Alpine-Catalogue of Data Sources (CDS) was launched on 15 July and is hosted at GRID-Geneva's website. This site does not provide direct access to the Alpine-CDS databank; the catalogue itself will be placed on the Internet by the end of 1999. On the other hand, the website provides background information about the CDS project and its objectives, and is available in three languages (English, French and German). A contact list of organizations participating in the project as well as of those that potentially could populate the Alpine-CDS has also been compiled. Finally, all data



holders can download and complete the meta-data questionnaire forms available at the website.

Two tools initially developed by BUWAL have been improved upon by GRID-Geneva: a "printing" and an

"importation merging" tool. These tools represent useful complementary add-ons to the WinCDS 2.0. The "importation-merging" tool is intended to allow the merging of two existing CDS files and the importation of Excel data. For example, the "importation merging" tool is currently being used to import alpine data from the Swiss Alpine Info-system database and which the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SAS) has kindly agreed to share with the Alpine-CDS. All meta-data

related to the Alps in the Swiss-CDS will subsequently be imported into the Alpine-CDS using this tool. Follow-up steps include the verification and addition of meta-data obtained from returned questionnaire forms, and on-line sharing of meta-data via the Internet similar to that of the European Environment Agency's CDS. ?

<http://www.grid.unep.ch/alpine-cds>

A Cities Environment Report On the Internet (CEROI) for Geneva

Development of "Local Agenda 21" plans is commanding much interest nowadays, particularly the preparation of city environment reports stemming from the importance of urban centers as sources of pollution and for their high resource consumption. Such a study is to be initiated for Geneva in the framework of the CEROI project, an international programme that provides a reporting template as well as tools to develop

reports on the city environment in a visual, easy-to-understand, well-structured and comparable way.

The City and State of Geneva have expressed their interest in this project. To help start the process, GRID-Geneva initiated contact with local actors to explain the project's objectives. After several meetings with the local government (Canton



and city of Geneva authorities), it is now confirmed that the CEROI-Geneva has been approved, and will be financed and made to complement other local studies. The preparation of the CEROI-Geneva should begin in May 2000. ?

Global Resource Information Database-Geneva

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Int'l Environment House Inaugurated

With much fanfare and in grand style, the "International Environment House" (IEH) was jointly inaugurated on 14 September 1999 by Dr. Klaus Töpfer, UNEP's Executive Director, Dr. Philippe Roch, the Director of the Swiss Federal Agency for Environment,

Forests and Landscape (BUWAL), and Mr. Laurent Moutinot, the Geneva State Councilor for the Department of Physical Planning, Equipment and Housing (DAEL). A large crowd of well-wishers from all walks of life joined the celebrations, from ambassadors and heads of UN agencies to community members of the local Geneva area. GRID-Geneva participated with an exhibition on UNEP and GRID activities. This consisted of a series of large posters affixed to panel displays, as well as various information products made available to the public.

Also introduced during the ceremonies was the recently



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From left to right: Swiss guard, Mr. L. Moutinot, Dr. K. Töpfer and Dr. P. Roch.

formed Geneva Environment Network (GEN), grouping various UN agencies and secretariats – including GRID-Geneva – as well as a substantial number of international environmental NGOs. The aim of the Network is to provide a 'one-stop shop' on environmental programs and activities based in Geneva. For more information about the IEH and GEN visit their recently-launched website at:

www.environmenthouse.ch

Calendar of Major Events & Missions Planned (October – December '99)

18-22 October

UNEP Assessment Division meeting to plan the costed work programme and Divisional strategy for 2000-2001 biennium, Nairobi, Kenya.

8 November

GRID-Geneva Partnership Advisory Board semi-annual meeting hosted by the University of Geneva, Switzerland.

15-19 November

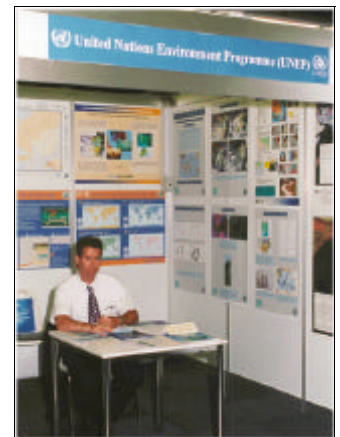
GEO-3 "Start-up" Planning Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya.

UNISPACE-III CONFERENCE

On behalf of UNEP/DEIA&EW, GRID-Geneva's Regional Coordinator took part in the UNISPACE-III Conference, organised by the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) in Vienna, from 18-24 July. This event was the major space-related meeting of governments, UN and national/regional space agencies, private industry and civil society representatives, as well as the last major UN Conference of the 20th century. Governments were participating to determine future space-related policies, and the related Technical Exhibition covered a host of subjects from global warming, to the recently-developed Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) for the Global Observing Systems as well as the latest applications using space-based technology for environmental management.

At the Technical Exhibition, the UNEP booth which was coordinated by GRID-Geneva included poster contributions from five of the GRID centres, and was visited by several hundred of the 2300 registered delegates attending UNISPACE-III. Ron Witt also

gave a radio interview to the UN Department of Public Information in New York about UNEP's participation in, and the expected outcome of UNISPACE-III, and attended a series of "technical fora" held there. The most prominent of these were the NASA Scientific Forum on Climate Variability and Global Change, and the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) Forum. ?



UNEP information stand at UNISPACE-III in Vienna, Austria.

Recent Publications and Other Products

New Publications

- ◆ **GEO-2000**
Produced in collaboration with a host of collaborating centers, this report is UNEP's major biennial assessment of the global state of the environment and is structured on a regional basis. An on-line version of GEO-2000 will soon be accessible from the GRID-Geneva website.
- ◆ **A GIS Database for the Regions of Gharm, Kulyab and Shartuz, Tajikistan**, (prepared by GRID-Geneva for UNOPS)
- ◆ **GRID-Geneva Annual Report 1998**
- ◆ **BTF Situation Reports 11 – 24**

GRID-Geneva Website

The GRID-Geneva website received over 55,000 visitors for the period July to September 1999.

Visit the GRID-Geneva website at:
<http://www.grid.unep.ch/>