



## GRID-Geneva Quarterly Bulletin No. 3 - 2000

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Global Resource Information Database-Geneva

### GRID-Geneva Supports the GEO-3 Process at Many Levels

As the calendar moves into the Autumn period, preparation of the third edition of UNEP's flagship publication, Global Environment Outlook (GEO-3), has shifted to a higher gear. GRID-Geneva, as DEIA&EW's primary European office, is fully engaged in the GEO-3 process on several fronts. The main activities now underway include:

#### Regional Coordination

Preparation of GEO reports involves consultations with and inputs from a wide variety of institutions and experts, both within UNEP and externally. While global supervision of the whole process is provided by the GEO-3 Management Team at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, at the regional level activities are managed by the Regional Coordinators of DEIA&EW, with support from UNEP's Regional Offices. Thus in his role as DEIA&EW Regional Coordinator-Europe, Ron Witt is the chief interface for European regional inputs into the GEO-3 process.

During quarter three of 2000, a number

of important activities have been carried out to assure that the GEO-3 process stays on track in the region. A start-up meeting for European Collaborating Centres (CCs) was held on 21-23 June in Geneva, where responsibilities for Euro-CCs in preparing their inputs for GEO-3 were determined and broader regional issues addressed. Immediately thereafter, the real work of preparing initial inputs for Chapter 2 on integrated State-of Environment and policy analyses began. Chapter 3 on "Outlooks" addressing future scenarios and vulnerability analysis, was dealt with at a meeting in Cambridge, UK, from 11-15 September. Some 35 persons from all regions, including selected CCs and other international experts on scenarios participated in the discussions. Four global scenarios were developed, which were further elaborated on from a regional perspective. Ron Witt led the discussions among the Euro-CCs and experts present (from Central European University, the European Environment Agency, RIVM-Netherlands and Russian Academy of Sciences).

The scenarios will be further discussed and refined in a European Expert Consultation planned to take place in Budapest in early November. This meeting will bring together additional European stakeholders from various sectors of society for an in-depth analysis of the Euro-scenarios.

At the same time, DEIA&EW/GRID-Geneva has been given a broad responsibility to oversee the data-related processes underpinning GEO-3, a role which has been discussed with the GEO-3 Management Team and elaborated in a proposal for GRID-Geneva to become the "GEO-3 Global Data Service Centre".

#### Core Data Sets

In collaboration with partner institutions, GRID-Geneva is supporting the approximately 35 CCs in their GEO work by providing access to "core data" from internationally recognized sources. In order to harmonize and streamline the reporting process, a common information

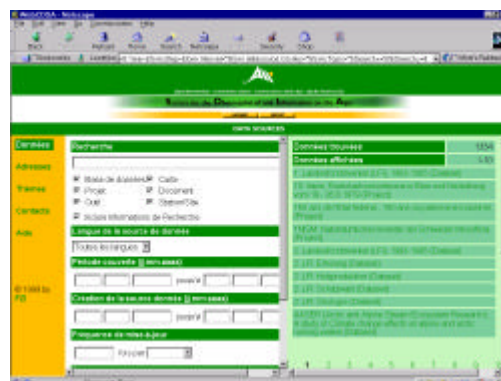
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### GRID-Geneva Hosts Regional Alpine Database

The Alpine Catalogue of Data Sources (Alpine-CDS) is an outstanding reference tool for environmental information about the Alps. It provides key meta-data documenting Alpine institutions and their data holdings that will be of use to decision-makers and scientists, as well as the general public. The Alpine-CDS has been jointly developed by the System for the Observation of and Information on the Alps (SOIA) and the Swiss Federal Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape (SAEFL), with technical backstopping from GRID-Geneva. In the initial pilot phase, meta-data were collected in Switzerland and from international sources. During this phase the software application, WebCDS-A, was managed by the SOIA Coordination Unit located at the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Union in Ispra, Italy. When this Unit was disbanded in early 2000, GRID-Geneva was asked by the SOIA working group to take charge of running the Alpine-CDS for an



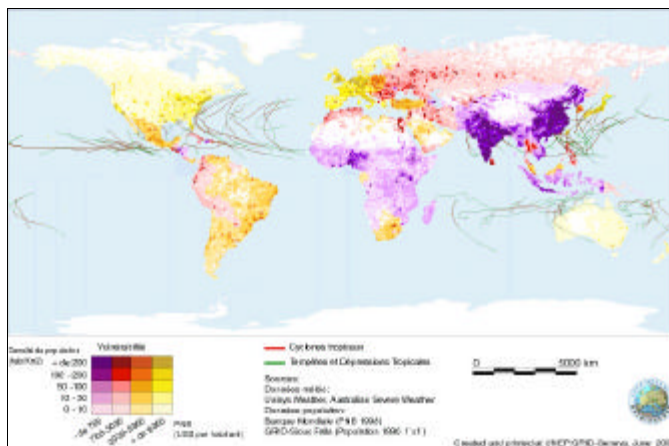
Alpine-CDS - soon available on Internet.

initial preparatory period. Consequently, the Alpine-CDS was transferred to a Linux server managed by GRID-Geneva. In addition to English, the Alpine-CDS will soon be made available in the languages of all Alpine Convention member countries; that is

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## Developing Indicators for Global Vulnerability Mapping

An "Expert Meeting on Vulnerability and Risk Analysis and Indexing" organized by UNDP was held at the International Environment House in Geneva on 11-12 September 2000. Representing UNEP/GRID-Geneva, Pascal Peduzzi presented the recently launched PREVIEW initiative - Project for Risk Evaluation, Information and Early Warning. One of the main topics of discussion was the development of a global risk/vulnerability index. This is a complex issue as hazards vary in type, frequency, magnitude, coverage (global/local), and duration. The inherent difficulties of comparing droughts in Africa with earthquakes in South America, for example, illustrates the complexity of dealing with a wide range of hazards in a systematic manner. Yet there is an urgent need to classify risks posed by natural and man-made hazards in order to direct international assistance for prevention where it is most needed.



Maps are powerful tools for communicating environmental risks to decision makers and the general public. The above illustrates the trajectory of cyclones in 1998-1999 in relation to vulnerable populations. Areas of high vulnerability appear in purple.

In the last 12 months, WebRelief reported the occurrence of 29 floods, 10 major earthquakes, nine droughts, six hurricanes, three mud and landslides. Thus far the international community has reacted after these events have taken place. Financial support has been mainly earmarked for aid and relief efforts and not towards preventative and mitigating measures. There is a critical need to develop a culture of prevention including landscape management and urban planning, education and awareness raising and early warning systems. In order to identify those populations facing the greatest threats, maps correlating the incidence of risks with

population distribution are useful visual tools for decision-makers. Although mapping a selected hazard may be relatively straightforward at the local scale, it is much more complex to do the same for multiple hazards at the global level.

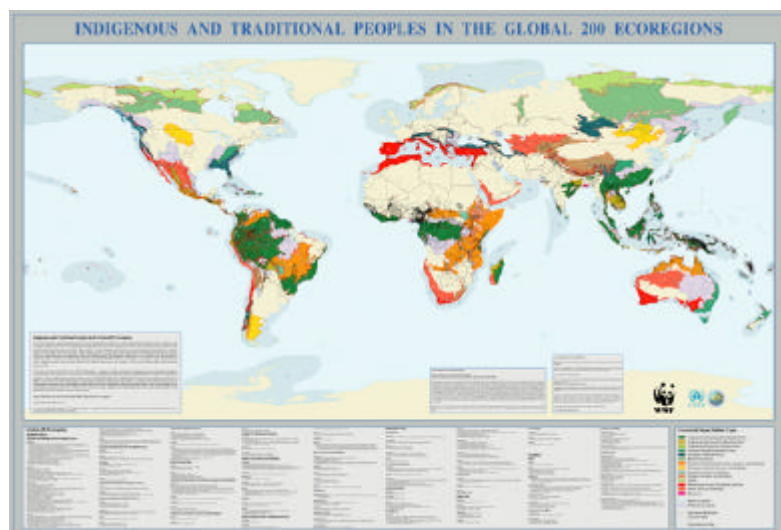
A preliminary version of the paper discussing the issue of Global Vulnerability Mapping and proposed approaches may be consulted at:

<http://www.grid.unep.ch/preview/appl/reports/reports.htm>

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## GRID-Geneva Cartographic Support to WWF's Global 200 Ecoregions

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) International has embarked on an innovative project to facilitate partnerships with indigenous, tribal and traditional peoples in ecoregion-based conservation, as part of its "Living Planet" campaign. Ecoregions are relatively large areas of land or water that harbour a characteristic set of species, communities, dynamics and environmental conditions. Initial steps included the identification of indigenous peoples living in each of the world's ecoregions. Their locations were then mapped in relation to a select list of two hundred outstanding ecoregions in the world for priority conservation, known as the Global 200. The mapping work would also help to highlight the presence of indigenous peoples in areas that are now the focus of WWF's conservation work. Ethno-linguistic groups identified include all indigenous, tribal and



This map assembled by UNEP/GRID-Geneva for WWF International, illustrates the distribution of indigenous peoples living in some of the world's most exceptional habitats.

traditional peoples of the world, although not only ethno-linguistic groups fall into these categories. The results reveal a very significant overlap between the world's biodiversity-richest areas and high concentrations of distinct cultures.

GRID-Geneva was called upon by WWF to provide Geographic Information System (GIS) support in data compilation and assemblage of its map on "Indigenous and Traditional Peoples in the Global 200 Ecoregions" and which was displayed at the EXPO 2000 in Hannover, Germany. The actual

baseline study and mapping was carried out by WWF International, WWF-United States, Terralingua, and Connecticut College (USA). The full report and the map will be published in December 2000, and made available on-line at WWF's website: [www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)

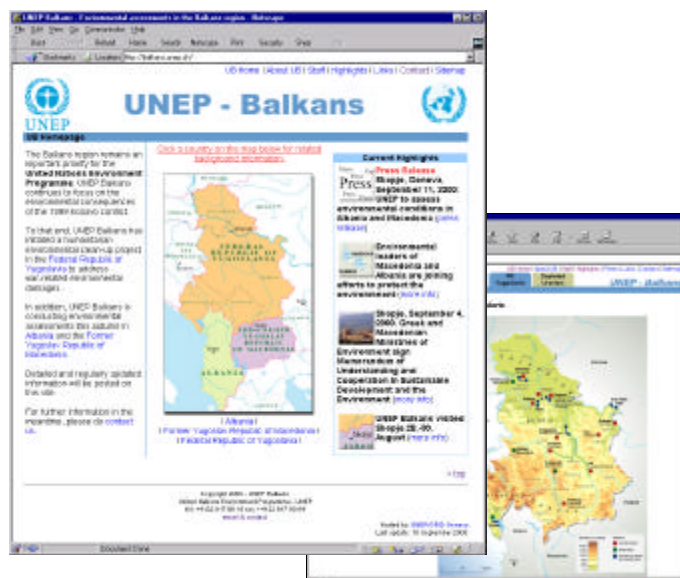
## UNEP Balkans Website Launched

In a follow-up phase to the work of the Balkans Task Force (BTF), initially set up to monitor the environmental impacts of the conflict in Kosovo, UNEP recently created a Balkans Unit to "initiate a humanitarian environmental clean-up project in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and to address war-related environmental damages". Furthermore, UNEP Balkans will also carry out conflict-related environmental assessments in neighbouring Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in Autumn 2000.

In order to assure partner organisations and scientists as well as the general public and the media with timely and transparent access to information, UNEP Balkans commissioned GRID-Geneva to design and host its web portal. The website is organised in four major parts dealing with: Albania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and a special dossier on depleted uranium. For Albania and Macedonia, a detailed account of the state of the environment will be provided, as well as the objectives and reports of various missions undertaken and thematic maps prepared by GRID-Arendal. As for the F. R. of Yugoslavia, the focus of reporting will be on the four major environmental "hot spots" identified in the BTF final report. Specifically, these deal with environmental contamination in the industrial sites of Bor, Kragujevac, Pancevo, and Novi Sad. Finally, a preliminary assessment of the potential human health and environmental repercussions arising from the possible use of depleted uranium during the conflict is also available.

For more information about the activities of UNEP Balkans, please consult: <http://balkans.unep.ch/> ?



The UNEP Balkans website, hosted and maintained by GRID-Geneva, provides the latest information on environmental rehabilitation activities in the Balkans.

## GRID-Geneva Support for GEO-3 Process

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base prototype, focusing on the major environmental themes is being developed to better underpin the GEO-3 report. Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Internet Map Server platform, a "GEO-3 Data Portal" was launched on the Internet for access by CCs and other GEO partners. RIVM's Jaap van Woerden has been engaged by UNEP to serve as GEO-3 Data Coordinator and oversee these activities, while the technical component is being implemented by UNEP consultant Stefan Schwarzer.

### Training Activities

A series of regional training seminars to support CCs is now in full sway. For this purpose, UNEP in collaboration with the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and with financial backing from the UN Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) launched a joint training programme to strengthen CC analytic and reporting capacity.

The first of these planned GEO training sessions was held for

West Asian CCs in Manama, Bahrain from 18-20 September. In collaboration with UNITAR, Carlos Munoz from GRID-Geneva was in charge of the training module dealing with "Data handling, management and integration of core data sets". CCs attending included the Arabian Gulf University (AGU), Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD) and the Directorate of Environmental Assessment and Planning of Bahrain. The next training session will be held for European CCs in Budapest, Hungary from 2-6 October.

The timeline for the training sessions is very tight and the last quarter of 2000 will see a succession of regional training workshops adapted to the specific needs of the various CCs and aimed at assisting them to produce concrete outputs for GEO-3. ?

## New Version of GEO-3 Website Available

The "GEO-3 Data Portal", formerly known as the "GEO-3 Core Data Sets On-Line", is now accessible to all Collaborating Centers and other GEO-3 partner institutions. Released on 1 September, this revised version not only has a more user-friendly look, but also includes a wide range of new geospatial data sets, now numbering approximately 200.

Other novel features include enhanced utilities, links to partner databases and map servers, and pertinent information about the GEO-3 process. Due to data copyright restrictions, this remains a restricted access website. ?

For more information, please contact:

[schwarzr@grid.unep.ch](mailto:schwarzr@grid.unep.ch)



The revised GEO-3 Data Portal is now available and all Collaborating Centres and other GEO partners are welcome to access and use it.



## Global Resource Information Database-Geneva

International Environment House (IEH), 11 chemin des Anémones, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland  
1st Floor, 'A' Block

Tel.: (+41-22) 917-8294

Fax: (+41-22) 917-8029

Email: [hassan.partow@grid.unep.ch](mailto:hassan.partow@grid.unep.ch) (Information Officer)

Visit the GRID-Geneva website at:

<http://www.grid.unep.ch/>

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## Recent Publications and Other Products

### New Websites

- ◆ UNEP Balkans website  
<http://balkans.unep.ch/>
- ◆ GEO-3 Data Portal  
(access is currently limited to UNEP Collaborating Centres and partner organisations)

### Maps

- ◆ Indigenous and Traditional Peoples in the Global 200 Ecoregions (in collaboration with WWF)
- ◆ Land Cover/Land Use in Central America (in collaboration

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## GRID-Geneva Hosts Alpine-CDS

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French, German, Italian and Slovenian. In addition, the application's multi-lingual support system allows for information searches to be made simultaneously in a dozen European languages.

Prior to launching the Alpine-CDS on the Internet, certain technical adjustments need to be made to the software, and data previously held in the former SOIA database ARIC (Alpine Research Institute Catalogue) are to be incorporated in the new system.

Lastly, on the request of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, a web portal is currently being developed, which will provide access to the various services offered by SOIA. These include the two meta-data catalogues

based on WebCDS technology: the aforementioned Alpine-CDS and the Information System for Alpine Research (SIRA), which focuses exclusively on research institutes, scientists and their Alpine projects. This on-line entry point will also allow users to consult the SOIA website and to access two services developed by Austria, an internal system for information exchange (CIRCA/EIONET) and a Geographic Information System database.

The Alpine-CDS is earmarked for launching towards the end of the year. As for the "meta-data bank", it should continue to flourish as Convention countries enrich it with their inputs. Within the context of meta-data activities, GRID-Geneva is implementing two other projects using CDS platforms, the Swiss-CDS and CDS-Geneva. ?

For more information please contact: [jean-philippe.richard@grid.unep.ch](mailto:jean-philippe.richard@grid.unep.ch)

## Meeting the People at "Science Night"

In collaboration with various local and international organisations, Geneva's Museum of Science hosted a full-day public event under the banner of "Science Night" on 8 July. Hosted in sumptuous gardens overlooking Lake Geneva, the event drew large crowds of people. Topics addressed ranged from probing the earth's sub-surface with seismic imaging and guided observations of night skies, to bee-keeping and mushroom harvesting.

GRID-Geneva, which is well placed in the local scene through its partnership association with the University of Geneva, hosted

an information stand focusing on the use of satellite imagery for improved environmental management and early warning. A poster exhibit displaying the research work of GRID-Geneva was mounted and computers were set up providing interactive demonstrations explaining how satellites observe the earth. Manned until the early hours of the morning by GRID-Geneva staff Prof. Jean-Michel Jaquet and Pascal Peduzzi, the information booth was heavily visited. In light of the high turnout and interest expressed by the public, the organizers have decided to repeat a "Science Night" next year. ?



Lively discussions at the GRID-Geneva information stand.

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### Calendar of Events, Meetings & Missions Planned (October – December 2000)

#### 28 September–6 October

UNEP Global Environmental Information Networking and Information System Design Workshop, Redlands, California, USA.

#### 2-6 October

Regional Workshop on Data/Information Management and Vital Graphics for GEO-3, Budapest, Hungary.

#### 25-27 October

Mediterranean Environment Remotely Sensed Information Web (MERSI-Web) & Middle East and African Remote Sensing International Symposium (MARISY 2000), Rabat, Morocco.

#### 3 November

GRID-Geneva Advisory Board Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland.

#### 6-8 November

Consultation of European Experts on GEO-3 Chapter 3 'Outlooks', Budapest, Hungary

#### 10-28 November

Biodiversity and Fires Impact Assessment Mission, Madagascar.

#### 5-7 December

UN Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG) Rome, Italy.

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