

**GSDI7 Special Session on International SDI Initiatives  
Bangalore, India; 2-6 February, 2004**

**PCIDEA's CURRENT ACTIVITIES IN THE AMERICAS**

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As reported in several forums and through some graphical presentations, the Permanent Committee for the Infrastructure of Geospatial Data of the Americas (PCIDEA) was established pursuant to Resolution number 3 of the Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas (UNRCCA), convened in New York City, June 1997. This resolution was issued in terms of the recommendation to the American countries to establish such Permanent Committee.

Associated to the third, Resolution number 4 recommended as well to consider the establishment of National Spatial data Infrastructures, and to all American member states to participate in the above defined Committee.

Both resolutions were given due consideration in a Meeting of Delegates and Experts of the United Nations Regional Conferences, summoned to attend in Aguascalientes, Mexico in March 1998, pursuant to an agreement taken in the above referred Cartographic Conference. The main outcome of this meeting was the preliminary establishment of the Committee.

At the present time the Organization groups 24 countries in the American Continent (Table1 in the next page). It is possible to say that the PCIDEA is a relatively young regional organization since its establishment in March 2000 with a First formal Meeting held in Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia, where important steps for the organization of the Permanent Committee took place and a first directive board was defined with the chair in Colombia through the National Geographic Institute Agustín Codazzi (IGAC), the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics of Mexico (INEGI) as Vice-president, and the Executive Secretariat in Colombia at IGAC.

The Second Meeting took place along with the 7th UNRCCA in New York City, January 2001, where initial ideas and concepts were reaffirmed relative to the development of regional and national spatial data infrastructures.

In that Conference it was stressed the necessity to create national conditions to guarantee that the development of the geographic information infrastructures should be supported as a strategic policy and recommended to all countries to adhere to the spatial data infrastructure concept and develop the strategies for implantation supporting the regional and global initiatives, while at the same time taking care of national objectives.

The Third Meeting took place in Cartagena, Colombia, in May of 2001 parallel to the 5th Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Conference (GSDI5), which for the first time was convened in a Latin American country. In this meeting the initial membership was increased, final Statutes and Bylaws were approved and three main working groups were established.

According to Article 3 of the Statutes, the Geospatial Data Infrastructure for the Americas is the geospatial fundamental data set, the standards allowing their integration, the mechanisms facilitating access and use, the policies, and the principles assuring their compatibility between member countries of the Permanent Committee.

<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Belize</b>	<b>Bolivia</b>
<b>Brasil</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Chile</b>
<b>Colombia</b>	<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>Cuba</b>
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>
<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Guyana</b>	<b>Honduras</b>
<b>Jamaica</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Nicaragua</b>
<b>Panama</b>	<b>Paraguay</b>	<b>Peru</b>
<b>United States Of America</b>	<b>Uruguay</b>	<b>Venezuela</b>

**Table 1. Member Countries of PCIDEA**

Recalling previous statements made public, the objectives, according to Article 5 of such Statutes consist on the establishment and coordination of policies and practical standards for the development of the regional infrastructure of Geospatial data for the Americas, as well as on promoting, with a high priority character, the establishment and development of national geospatial data infrastructures for each one of the members of the Permanent Committee.

Other objectives as well are to promote the interchange of geospatial information between all members of the American community with due respect to their autonomy and according to their policies and national laws, to stimulate the cooperation, complementation and research, the interchange of experiences in areas of knowledge as related to geospatial matters, and to define guidelines and strategies to support the member nations in the development of cadastral information considering the individual necessities of each country.

The three main working groups were established as follows:

Group on Legal and Economic Aspects,  
Group on Communications, and  
Group on Technical issues,

This last Group includes seven sub-groups, to work on subjects related to

Fundamental Data,  
Geospatial Standards,  
Policies,  
Clearinghouses,  
Cadastre,  
Geographic Names, and  
Capacity Building.

Each one of these groups is coordinated by a representative of a member country and are composed by professionals and technicians appointed by the main geospatial organizations of member countries. In the next paragraphs a list of the main objectives as defined for the different working groups is presented with the idea to characterize the current activities of PCIDEA:

### **Legal and Economic Aspects**

To carry out the revision and adjustment of the Statutes of PCIDEA, taking care of technical considerations and legal principles, with the purpose of having a legal frame supporting the establishment and operation of the Spatial data Infrastructure.

### **Communications**

To disseminate basic concepts about SDIs with ample cover and in greater detail in a thematic context reaching a country (case study)

### **Technical Issues**

#### **Fundamental Data:**

To define, establish and generate a set of basic geographic data of high usability for which there is a justified necessity in the national and regional levels, aiming to impel sustainable development and the execution of projects involving geographic Information.

#### **Geospatial Standards**

To develop and promote through the members the collection, use and efficient management of standards for regional geographic information.

#### **Interinstitutional Policies and Agreements**

To propose resolutions and recommendations focused on dissemination, quality standards, and guidelines to share and interchange geospatial data in the regional,

national and local scopes, considering legal, technical, social and economic aspects of member countries.

### Clearinghouses

To install a node of Clearinghouse in each one of the member countries with the purpose of establishing the geographic metadata consultation system, through the support and technological assistance from the FGDC and Colombia, to facilitate consultation and retrieval of geographic information through the Internet.

### Cadastral

To develop initiatives and actions among member countries of PCIDEA aimed to consolidate the importance of cadastral for the development of the SDI and for the strengthening of a common language between the nations, oriented to guide cadastral development under the vision of SDI.

### Geographic Names

To support and fortify the advanced initiatives from the Groups of Experts of the United Nations, the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) and the authorities or national committees, for the normalization and the precise and consistent use of geographic names, as an essential element for the global, regional and national SDIs, necessary for communications, the processes of socioeconomic sustainable development and the regional infrastructure.

### Capacity Building

To increase the management capacity of the Permanent Committee for the Geospatial Data Infrastructure of the Americas, PCIDEA, and of its members, through the formalization of agreements about technical and financial cooperation on the part of the different sectors of the international community, to guarantee the technological transference and the sustainable development of the region.

So far, several of these groups have not shown so much progress as set in the working programs, mainly because of lack of proper integration and communication, which is considered as one of the main concerns to deal with in the next times.

During the Third Meeting the Committee elected new authorities, with the Chair switching from Colombia to Venezuela in the Simon Bolivar National Geographic Institute of Venezuela (IGVSB by its acronym in Spanish); the Vice-presidency went to Panama, in the Tommy Guardia National Geographic Institute, and with the Executive Secretariat in Colombia, under the IGAC as before.

The Fourth Meeting of PCIDEA took place in San Jose, Costa Rica in June 2003, along with a Technical Meeting of the Commission of Cartography of the Panamerican Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), specialized body of the Organization of

American States (OAS), of a long and standing prestige, where there is a strong interest in matters related to the implementation of spatial data infrastructures in the Americas.

In this Meeting new authorities were elected, with the Chair now at INEGI in Mexico, the Vice-presidency was reelected, and the Executive Secretariat is now under the responsibility of INEGI.

In his message of acceptance, the new Chairman, Eng. Mario Alberto Reyes Ibarra emphasized the fact that there are strong challenges to face regarding development of the Regional Infrastructure as well as in promoting national initiatives, which requires much of strengthening PCIDEA.

It is necessary to develop and give rise to new paradigms within the American nations and try to open new doors with the rest of the world, which for sure will give rise to new challenges associated to mutual understanding, cooperation, fostering the development of knowledge and the aperture of opportunities in the realm of an information and globalized communications world.

It is necessary to work in developing new ideas and concepts associated to geospatial data which permit fostering appropriate decisions taking regarding sustainable development in the American nations, recognizing that we are in a context where everyone must learn from the others.

In answer to the previously mentioned Resolution 4 of the Sixth UNRCCA, there are several countries of the Region working at these times in the conception, development and implantation of spatial data infrastructures, some of them with some previous work before the Sixth UNRCCA. Several of them are still in the conceptual stage; others are taking definite steps towards implementation, with several degrees of progress to date. Others, as those of the United States of America (NSDI) and Canada (CGDI) have very important achievements, both in the conceptual aspects as in the implementation stages. This includes a remarkable progress from Colombia with the Spatial Data Colombian Infrastructure (ICDE, for its acronym in Spanish).

Table 2 of this document lists the different initiatives so far taken in the Americas

On the other hand several member countries, with the assistance of the FGDC, have already at least a Clearinghouse node in operation. Table 3 of this report presents a listing of countries having this resource in the Americas.

Trying to cover for standardization, PCIDEA has a class A liaison with ISO/TC211, the International Standardization Organization from which valuable information regarding geographic information/geomatics standards is being received. Work is underway to organize and make this information available for the general benefit of PCIDEA.

PCIDEA has already a Website which is hoped to be updated and used to fortify communication, as announced in the part of this report dealing with the Program of Work for the next two years

<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Bermuda</b>
<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>Chile</b>	<b>Colombia</b>
<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>Cuba</b>	<b>Dominican Republic</b>
<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>
<b>Honduras</b>	<b>Jamaica</b>	<b>Mexico</b>
<b>Nicaragua</b>	<b>Panama</b>	<b>Peru</b>
<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	<b>United States of America</b>	<b>Uruguay</b>
<b>Venezuela</b>		

**Table 2. American Countries with SDI Initiatives**

<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Barbados</b>	<b>Bolivia</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>Chile</b>	<b>Colombia</b>
<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>Dominica</b>	<b>Dominican Republic</b>
<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduras</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Nicaragua</b>	<b>Peru</b>
<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	<b>United States of America</b>	<b>Uruguay</b>
<b>Venezuela</b>		

**Table 3. American Countries with Clearinghouse**

### **Programme of work for 2004-2005**

#### **Strengthening links with other organizations**

Plans of PCIDEA for the next two years include the establishment and strengthening of bonds and relationships with leading global and regional geospatial organizations in the field, such as GSDI, the sister organizations of PCGIAP, the emergent African initiative (SDI – Africa) and EUROGI, as well as OGC, PAIGH, FGDC, ISO/TC211, ICA and ISCGM, specially with the UN, among others.

### **Redefinition of working groups**

The program of work contemplates the redefinition, fortification and dynamical behavior of the working groups as stated in a previous paragraph.

### **Support to regional and subregional initiatives.**

The program will include as well the support to regional and subregional initiatives such as those regarding the conformance of the Geocentric Reference System for the Americas (SIRGAS for its acronym in Spanish) and the Mesoamerican and Caribbean Geospatial Alliance (MACGA). This last initiative where several leading continental organizations plus others from Europe are involved is considered important since it aims to develop the Spatial Data Infrastructures covering the Mesoamerican subregion including the south of Mexico and the 7 central American countries and those of the Caribbean area, through a collaborative effort from several interested geographical and environmental institutions.

### **Membership reinforcement.**

Steps will be taken to reinforce membership, aiming to cover for the whole American Continent.

### **Organization of Shops.**

Organization of regional shops such as one planned on Geographic Names at a date to be defined for next year, and a shop on Metadata Development, Management of Clearinghouse and Web Map Service (WMS), according to the experience developed at INEGI.

Both will be given in Aguascalientes, Mexico, the second one by November 2004, with the partial financial support from the PAIGH.

### **Next CPIDEA Meetings**

The programme includes as well the organization of the 5<sup>th</sup> PCIDEA Meeting in Aguascalientes, Mexico, by October 2004, probably along with a shop on Earth Management Policies, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting in a place and date to be defined for 2005, coincident with the next UNRCCA, most probably in New York.

## **Enhancement of communications**

One of the main lines of work will consist on promoting a better communication with and among member countries, trying to encourage participation, using for this purpose the modern resources provided by the modern technologies on information and communication.

The above includes the addition of possibilities to present information on development projects of geospatial information generated in the member countries, and of establishing discussion forums through the Website of PCIDEA. The idea is to make PCIDEA a more dynamical organization and foster collaboration where it may be practicable and of advantage.

## **Conclusion**

PCIDEA is a rather young organization aiming to put together common interests in the realm of geospatial information for the development of national spatial data infrastructures to be integrated in a regional context as well as in the global one. The increasing demands imposed by globalization, economic sustainable development and the ever present growing technology can not be ignored. PCIDEA progress is on the line but will take some time to reach all of its goals within a formal reality. However, we are quite confident that through mutual understanding, cooperation and the will to make things happen in our American Nations, those goals will be attained in due time.