

Prashant Shukle (Natural Resources Canada) – Chair’s Plenary Thought Provoker: From Satellite to Handheld

The importance and relevance of convergence in the geospatial environment and for the economy of the future was highlighted. Beyond technologies and platforms, it is the merging of inter-disciplinary thinking, the sharing of knowledge and assets, and the integration of standards. Focusing on the breakout workshops, the Chair provided the audience with his reflections on each of the themes:

Workshop 1: Consider and determine the relevance, roles and outputs of the future NMGA in a digital economy.

The analogy of ‘candles and electricity’ highlighted that once something becomes widely accessible the value ascribed to it changes – electricity has become a common good while candles have become associated with luxury. Building on this example, the workshop participants were asked to consider the increased availability of open data as a risk for the loss of the value of data overall. As such, NMGAs have a responsibility associated with trust something other data providers do not have. This could contribute to the increase in long-term value of NMGAs.

Workshop 2: Consider the relevance, roles and outputs of the future NMGA in achieving sustainable development.

The participants were asked to consider ‘ecosystems of ecosystems’ from local to global levels by breaking down disciplinary silos. The workshop was challenged to think about how diverse datasets can be brought together, and how greater transparency and open government can be initiated.

Workshop 3: Consider the key areas of transformation on the road ahead for NMGAs and the obstacles to change.

Using Canada as an example, it was emphasised that working in collaboration and sharing information across a number of organisations was key to capacity building to confront change. Two key challenges here highlighted: First, the need for standards in the economy of the future; and, second, the need for NMGAs to overcome outdated business models in terms of sharing data and collaboration with the private sector.

Workshop 4: What will be the relevance and benefit of a NSDI in 2027?

Today, a SDI needs to incorporate physical assets as part of its key capabilities including broadband connectivity and other data infrastructures.

Workshop 5: Feeding the geospatial needs of a city in 2027 – what needs to change?

Similar to a NSDI, geospatial underpins all activities of the urban environment. Beyond its geographical location, cities have also become ‘invisible nation states’ or clusters based on similarities linked through the digital infrastructure. These clusters can contribute to the rise of Global SDIs or a digital earth.