

Session 7: Open Discussion and GGOS Affiliates: summary notes

GGOS-Africa 2026 Workshop, Nairobi · Wednesday 7 October 2026 · 09:30–10:00 EAT (recorded part)

Moderator: Jack Radcliffe

Written from the Zoom transcript (from 09:38) and an automatic whisper.cpp transcript for the first minutes, which may contain errors. Audience speakers' names are given only where they could be identified with reasonable confidence. Please check against the recording before quoting anyone.

From 10:00 the workshop joined GGOS Days 2026 (Sweden) online for the GGOS Affiliates presentations. That part was not recorded here and is not covered by these notes.

Key points

- **The slot for questions deferred from Tuesday became a wider discussion**, mostly about who should own continent-wide projects such as AFREF and the African geoid.
- **Continental projects should rest on institutions, not individuals.** Too many past initiatives faded when their champions retired.
- **The African geoid** (led by Hussein Abd-Elmotaal, with releases in 2007, 2019 and 2025) is happening outside AFREF and GGOS-Africa. Participants asked for it to be brought into the existing frameworks.
- **The UN-GGIM: Africa AFREF Working Group has a dormant task force on levelling and the height reference frame.** It offered to revive it, with a GGOS-Africa focal point to lead.
- **A proposal to give AFREF a clear mandate and identity:** an interim committee writes a white paper, and UNECA is asked to host an AFREF domain and website and give a little funding. Data requests would then come from "AFREF", not from RCMRD or NGI.

Discussion

- **Ghana's CORS PPP (follow-up to Session 5; Yao Ziggah).**
 - A share of revenue goes to the Lands Commission as regulator and is ring-fenced. After the 20-year MoU, the legal backing keeps the government involved, which should avoid the LAP I/II problem of stations with no money for upkeep.
 - On data sharing: the agreements he has seen say nothing about data access (the network is hosted on GMX's platform). He will raise it on his return.
- **The African geoid and gravity data (participant).**
 - The African geoid of 2007 combined gravity data from many countries. Since then several countries have computed their own geoids (e.g. Tanzania's, from airborne gravity).
 - How will mapping agencies be persuaded to release gravity data for a combined African geoid? A strong, autonomous AFREF making the request would help.
 - A Ugandan participant described a request for national gravity data from the international geoid team being declined. Holders of national data should work with physical geodesists who have the capacity to do the computations.
- **Who runs it? (participant, then Lazarus Ojigi).**
 - The African geoid has been driven largely by one research team (Prof. Abd-Elmotaal; AFRgeo 2025 was published a few months ago). Is that done with the working groups?
 - **Ojigi:** continental projects tied to individuals die when those individuals leave the scene. Of the people at the 2017 Addis Ababa meeting, many have retired. "Put the centre on the institution rather than the individual."
 - **Radcliffe:** agreed. Champions matter but change, and the same applies to GGOS-Africa.
- **Bring the geoid into existing frameworks (participant).** Rather than a new committee, could the African geoid sit within AFREF or GGOS-Africa?
 - **Radcliffe:** from the GGOS side there would be room, for example as a working group. Better than "another thing going on" that causes miscommunication and reinvents the wheel.
 - **AFREF Working Group member:** the UN-GGIM: Africa AFREF WG has a task force on levelling and the height reference frame that is not currently active. They will share its terms of reference and suggested a GGOS-Africa focal point lead it. Participants suggested connecting it with the geoid group.

- **A professional society (participant).** He proposed a strong union or society for geodesy to make better use of human resources and support the institutions.
- **An AFREF with a mandate (Elifuraha Saria).**
 - Countries hesitate to share data because requests come from RCMRD or NGI, not from an AFREF with a real mandate.
 - Proposal: UNECA hosts an AFREF domain and website (and perhaps a little funding). An interim committee prepares standards, application forms and a **white paper**, which André Nonguierma would take to UNECA.
 - AFREF would then ask mapping agencies directly for their data, and African national computations would align with AFREF (and AFREF with ITRF).
 - This complements rather than sidelines GGOS and UN-GGIM: “we cannot make AFREF die” while EUREF and SIRGAS thrive.
 - **Response (participant):** Saria already leads the relevant IAG sub-commission working group for Africa. He should email the UN-GGIM: Africa AFREF Working Group, copying André, to request this collaboration.

The session closed at 10:00 to join GGOS Days 2026 online for the GGOS Affiliates presentations.

Actions and follow-ups mentioned

- Ziggah to raise data access in Ghana’s CORS PPP agreements.
- AFREF WG to share the terms of reference of its levelling and height-reference task force, and look for a GGOS-Africa focal point to lead it; connect it with the African geoid team.
- Saria to write to the UN-GGIM: Africa AFREF Working Group (copying André Nonguierma) proposing an interim committee and white paper on AFREF’s mandate and UNECA hosting.