



United Nations

# Press Release

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## EXPERTS ON GEORGRPHICAL NAMES MEET AT HEADQUARTERS, 17-28 JANUARY

NEW YORK, 19 January (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) -- The twentieth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names is taking place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 17 to 28 January with the participation of some 150 experts representing 22 linguistic/geographical divisions.

The work of the Group addresses programmes which implement national and international standardization of geographical names (toponyms). Consistent use of accurate place names is an essential element of effective communication worldwide and supports socio-economic development, conservation and national infrastructure.

In particular, experts will discuss and propose steps to encourage advancements in standardizing and disseminating correct written forms of geographical names, as they are nationally recognized. Working groups will, therefore, address questions on training courses in toponymy, toponymic data files and gazetteers, toponymic terminology, romanization systems for languages that use non-Roman script, and standardization in multilingual areas.

To promote the distribution of nationally standardized geographical names, emphasis will be put on promoting the benefits of the consistent use of place names and on the dissemination of those toponyms on maps, in gazetteers and in digital form. The use of the Internet will help the Group of Experts reach wider audiences around the globe, and add to the effectiveness of standardization programmes.

In its work towards effective communication, the Group of Experts on Geographical Names is challenged by the ever-changing political patterns of the world. Progress in standardization can help eliminate inaccuracy and misrepresentation of geographical names, which can lead to inefficiency and misdirection. Correct use of accurate place names can provide benefits to local, national and international communities engaged in a wide range of activities, including trade and commerce, population censuses, property rights, urban and regional planning, environmental management, emergency preparedness, security strategy and peace-keeping operations, search and rescue operations, map and atlas production, navigation, tourism and communications.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Statistics Division provides secretariat services to the Group of Experts and its sessions, as well as to the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

This Group of Experts is not only dealing with the outcomes of the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in 1998, but also making recommendations for the next Eighth Conference planned for August/September 2002 in Berlin.

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