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**11th United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 8 -17 August 2017

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical
names since the 10th Conference (for distribution only).**

National report on Progress made since the 10th UNCSGN

Submitted by the State of Palestine**

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** Prepared by the Palestine National Committee for Geographic Names (PNCGN)



Palestine National Committee on Geographic Names

Report

**30th UNGEGN session and 11th UNCISG
New York, 7-18 August 2017**

“National Report on Progress Made Since The 10th UNCISG”

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**The Palestine National Committee for
Geographic Names (PNCGN)**

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1 Context

The Palestine National Committee on Geographic Names (PNCNGN) was formed based on the decree of the Palestine Council of Minister's in August 2010, in order to take care of all issues related to geographic names in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This decision aligns with the recommendations and resolutions of the United Nations, particularly those that emerged from the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) which encourages member states to establish national committees to be in charge of geographic names. Moreover, this decision reinforces the desire of the State of Palestine to extend its presence and participation in all United Nations entities, especially after the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state in the United Nations, taken by the Nations General Assembly in 2012. In addition, the formation of PNCNGN confirms the comprehensive awareness and the realization of benefits of the standardization of geographic names and toponyms, as they carry historical, social, cultural, political, and economical components for any country, as well as identifying the characteristics and relationships between people, language, and place.

In January 2015, the PNCNGN provided the Councils of Ministers with a list of recommendations relating to geographical names in Palestine. As a first action, the Council of Ministers requested the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) to review and verify the spelling, pronunciation, and spatial locations of around 15,000 points that represent the names of all sites and features in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to British maps printed in 1942. MOLG completed the task and made it reachable by a web mapping application, known as geomolg. In 2016, MOLG became the Chair of the PNCNGN, and wanted to expand and activate its role in the Arab Division for Group of Experts in Geographic Names (ADGEGN), United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), and to promptly participate in United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN).

2 Members of PNCNGN

Structurally, the PNCNGN consists of members from governmental, private, academic, and NGO institutions. The multidisciplinary members of PNCNGN facilitate and ease coming up with mature work and output that significantly serves the scope and vision of forming the PNCNGN. More specifically, the PNCNGN includes representatives from the following agencies:

1. Ministry of Local Government (Chair),
2. Ministry of Transportation,
3. Ministry of Religious Affairs,
4. Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities,
5. Palestine Land Authority (PLA),
6. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS),
7. Palestinian Universities (An-Najah National University, Birzeit University, and Al-Quds University), various NGO's and
8. Private Sector organisations.

3 Key Tasks of the PNCNGN

The main duties of the PNCNGN can be summarized as follows:

1. Unifying geographical names in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

2. Preserving Arabic names for all locations and features as a reflection of culture and heritage
3. Raising awareness of the importance of authoritative geographic names
4. Protecting local geographical names from external influences
5. Creating an electronic database to store geographic names in spatial format
6. Preparing an Atlas of the geographical names
7. Creating names for newly constructed geographical features and communities
8. Applying national and international standards for geographic names
9. Promoting the usage of authoritative geographic names in official documents, maps, Atlas and Gazetteers.

4 Summery for the activities of PNCGN since the 10th UNCSGN

The PNCGN held 6 meetings in 2016/2017 to follow up on a number of issues, amongst:

1. The continuation in reviewing and correcting geographic names in cooperation with local communities
2. There are ongoing efforts to develop an Atlas for geographic names in Palestine which will contain (in addition to geographic names) roads network, built up areas and contours.
3. Sharing the geographic names via geomolg portal for geospatial information to facilitate approaching them and secure their availability online in a dynamic environment.
4. The participation in the 29th UNGEGN session held in Bangkok during 23 April-1 May 2016
5. Publishing an article in the UNGEGN bullet information under the title "Palestine Experience on Geographic Names" in the 50th issue disseminated in June 2016.
6. The participation in the 1st meeting of ADGEGN held in Riyadh during 9-11 May 2017. The main discussion has focused on approving the romanization system for Arabic alphabet.
7. Preparation for the participation in 30th UNGEGN session and 11th UNCSGN