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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**  
**2019 session**  
New York, 29 April–3 May 2019

**Annotated provisional agenda**

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Organizational matters:
  - (a) Adoption of the rules of procedure;
  - (b) Adoption of the agenda;
  - (c) Organization of work, including establishment of subsidiary bodies;
  - (d) Credentials of representatives.
4. Reports of the Chair and the Secretariat.
5. Reports:
  - (a) Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names;
  - (b) Divisions of the Group of Experts;
  - (c) Working Group on Country Names;
  - (d) National and international meetings and conferences.
6. Cooperation and liaison with other organizations:
  - (a) International organizations;
  - (b) Economic Commission for Africa and Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.
7. National and international standardization of geographical names:
  - (a) Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation;
  - (b) Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use.



8. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions and evaluation of the work of the Group of Experts (Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation).
9. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects (Working Group on Publicity and Funding).
10. Activities on national standardization in Africa (Task Team for Africa).
11. Toponymic education (Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy).
12. Toponymic terminology (Working Group on Toponymic Terminology).
13. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues (Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage).
14. Exonyms (Working Group on Exonyms).
15. Toponymic data files and gazetteers (data processing and tools, database management, data dissemination: products and services) (Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers).
16. Writing systems and pronunciation (Working Group on Romanization Systems).
17. Other toponymic issues.
18. Arrangements for the 2021 session of the Group of Experts.
19. Other business.
20. Presentation and adoption of decisions.
21. Adoption of the report on the 2019 session.
22. Election of officers of the 2021 session.
23. Closing of the session.

## **Annotations**

### **1. Opening of the session**

The provisional programme for the opening session should include an opening address by the Chair of the session, in which he informs the Group of the activities of the Bureau during the transition period and provides the vision for the 2019 session. This will be followed by welcome and opening remarks from the Director of the Statistics Division. Additional speakers may be added to the programme for the opening session.

### **2. Election of officers**

In its resolution [2018/2](#), the Economic and Social Council adopted the working arrangements for the “new” United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, including to decide that the elected Bureau of the Group of Experts would be maintained to oversee the 2017–2019 transition.

Furthermore, in rule 7 of the rules of procedure of the Group of Experts, as set out in Council decision 2018/264 (see [E/2018/INF/2](#)), the Group will have a Bureau elected from among the representatives of Member States and will comprise a Chair, two Vice-Chairs and two Rapporteurs, who will guide the activities of the Group during

and between its sessions. The Bureau should be elected with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical rotation of those officers from among the regions of the Member States.

According to rule 8 of the rules of procedure, the officers of the 2019 session of the Group will be elected at the commencement of the session and will serve until the terms of office of their successors commence. The officers of the subsequent sessions will be elected at the end of the session prior to the one in which they will assume their functions. They will serve for two sessions and until the terms of office of their successors commence. They will be eligible for re-election.

#### **Documentation**

*No documentation required.*

### **3. Organizational matters**

#### **(a) Adoption of the rules of procedure**

Pursuant to Council resolution [2018/2](#), the rules of procedure were drafted by the Bureau of the Group of Experts, in consultation with States Members of the United Nations. The Council adopted the rules of procedure of the Group of Experts in its decision 2018/264.

#### **Documentation**

Rules of procedure (GEGN.2/2019/2)

#### **(b) Adoption of the agenda**

The items on the provisional agenda were proposed by the Bureau during the intersessional period (2017–2019) and were adopted by the Council in its decision 2018/264.

#### **Documentation**

Provisional agenda and annotations (GEGN.2/2019/1)

#### **(c) Organization of work, including establishment of subsidiary bodies**

The proposed organization of work and times for the 2019 session of the Group of Experts has been prepared pursuant to relevant decisions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Bureau of the Group of Experts to facilitate the consideration of agenda items within the time and services allocated to the Group. The proposed organization of work and documents for the session will continue to be updated in the course of the preparations for the session.

In its resolution [2018/2](#), the Council decided that the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names should be discontinued in their current formats and be subsumed by a subsidiary body of the Council that would retain their respective mandates. The subsidiary body would be named the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

#### **Documentation**

Organization of work for the 2019 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (GEGN.2/2019/3)

List of working groups and Task Team for Africa (GEGN.2/2019/INF/3)

**4. Reports of the Chair and of the Secretariat**

The Chair of the Bureau and the representative of the Statistics Division will present reports on the activities undertaken during the intersessional period in accordance with decisions and resolutions, future plans and priorities of the Group.

**Documentation**

Report of the Chair (GEGN.2/2019/4)

Report of the Secretariat (GEGN.2/2019/5)

**5. Reports****(b) Divisions of the Group of Experts**

The Group of Experts will have before it, for information, the reports submitted by its geographical and linguistic divisions. The Chair may request that a division report be brought forward for discussion should there be a matter relating to its work or its structure and the creation or dissolution of a division.

**Documentation**

Papers to be submitted by the geographic and linguistic divisions

**(c) Working Group on Country Names**

The Group of Experts will have before it, for information, the report of the Working Group consisting of an updated list of country names. The list is contained in a working paper that is presented to the Group of Experts at each of its sessions. Updates to the list are informally agreed upon by the Working Group on the basis of information collected from various sources. The list is intended to serve as a general reference document and to facilitate the exchange of information within the Group of Experts.

**Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Country names on its activities during the intersessional period (GEGN.2/2019/6)

List of country names (GEGN.2/2019/7)

Papers may be submitted by Member States

**(d) National and international meetings and conferences**

The Group of Experts will have before it, for information and discussion, reports from Member States and from divisions, working groups and liaison bodies of the Group of Experts detailing the convening and outputs of meetings, conferences, symposiums and workshops held in support of sharing knowledge, experiences and thoughts on the standardization of geographical names. This is in accordance resolution II/19 of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, in which the Conference recommended that each division prepare a programme of meetings to be submitted to the United Nations.

**Documentation**

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups.

## **6. Cooperation and liaison with other organizations**

### **(a) International organizations**

In accordance with resolution II/33 of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and section III (h) of its guiding principles, the Group of Experts has established and maintained liaison with scientific and academic international organizations such as the International Cartographic Association; and Technical Committee 211 of the International Organization for Standardization. The appointed liaison officers of the Group of Experts will report on their interaction since 2017 with those international groups as well as with the following: Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, International Council of Onomastic Sciences, International Council on Indigenous Place Names, International Hydrographic Organization, Pan-American Institute of Geography and History, Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research and Unicode Consortium. The Group of Experts will open discussions for suggested improvements in cooperation and liaison activity with those groups. Discussions may also be held on liaison activity with other international groups. Possibilities for the Group of Experts to establish formal cooperation with additional international groups will be discussed, as necessary.

#### **Documentation**

Papers to be submitted by international organizations and appointed liaison officers.

### **(b) Economic Commission for Africa and Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management**

Pursuant to Council resolution [2018/2](#), in which the Council reaffirmed the need to strengthen the joint work between the Group of Experts and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, the Group of Experts has been endeavouring to build effective and streamlined relations with the Committee of Experts, through collaborative efforts such as joint meetings and participation across workings groups. In addition, the Group of Experts has sought to promote the establishment of geographical name authorities in Africa with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the secretariat of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa. The secretariat will report on progress on the implementation of the Gaborone Action Plan on Geographical Names in Africa and the Africa GeoNyms gazetteer project. The Group of Experts will have before it the reports of ECA and the secretariat outlining the activities conducted during the intersessional period and future plans to enhance collaborative efforts.

#### **Documentation**

Report of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (GEGN.2/2019/8)

Report of the Economic Commission for Africa and the secretariat of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa (GEGN.2/2019/9)

**7. National and international standardization of geographical names****(a) Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation**

Presentations and discussion should focus on best practices, new approaches, problems faced and possible solutions with regard to achieving national standardization of geographical names. The topic is broad in scope and includes: methods of names collection (field collection, archival sourcing, crowdsourcing, postal surveys, submissions from the general public, etc.); treatment of names in the office (approaches to resolving duplication, name changes, merging of administrative units, commemorative naming, multiple naming and diverse languages and populations, street naming, etc.); legislation, policies and guidelines for names authorities (laws, board structures, principles, programme planning, extent of mandates, relationships of various naming bodies, etc.); names for particular purposes (hydrology, mountain areas, etc.) or standardization requirements of particular user groups (education, emergency operations, different levels of government, etc.). In addition, the agenda item includes names of features beyond a single sovereignty, as well as items relating to international cooperation on geographical names standardization.

**Documentation**

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups

**(b) Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use**

In accordance with resolution IV/4 of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the Conference recommended that countries should be encouraged to publish and keep up-to-date toponymic guidelines for map and other editors. The coordinator of work under the item continues to provide support to Member States to prepare, update and disseminate such guidelines. The Group of Experts will have before it, for information and consideration, a report prepared by the coordinator in which he outlines the status of updated and new toponymic guidelines, describes efforts to disseminate the guidelines and make them available and calls upon Member States that do not have guidelines to prepare them.

**Documentation**

Report of the coordinator responsible for toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use (GEGN.2/2019/10)

Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use to be submitted by Member States

**8. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions and evaluation of the work of the Group of Experts  
(Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation)**

The Group of Experts addresses the implementation of tasks assigned as a result of the resolutions adopted by the former United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and by the new United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names as one of its aims. Under the agenda item, presentations and discussions will focus on measures to implement the resolutions, as well as experiences in implementing them, within the context of the Group of Experts or at the country level. The discussions on implementing the resolutions are expected

to lead to further developments by creating social and economic benefits and supporting the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development. A total of 211 resolutions have been adopted so far. Discussion will also be held with regard to the functioning and efficacy of the Group of Experts, including to look at the need for developing countries to achieve national standardization of their geographical names and to increase the effectiveness of meetings and subsidiary bodies of the Group of Experts.

#### **Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation (GEGN.2/2019/11)

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups

### **9. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects (Working Group on Publicity and Funding)**

The Group of Experts will have before it, for information, the report prepared by the working group in which it outlines the aims and activities of the working group in raising awareness of the need for geographical names standardization and in advancing the digital presence of Group of Experts on the web and social media and through the Group of Experts media kit. In its report, the working group also highlights efforts to find financial support for toponymic training, to establish national geographical names authorities and to allow for representatives from developing countries to attend sessions of the Group of Experts. The report is intended to facilitate the exchange of information within the Group of Experts.

#### **Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding (GEGN.2/2019/12)

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups

### **10. Activities on national standardization in Africa (Task Team for Africa)**

At its twenty-second session, held in 2004, the Group of Experts established the Task Team for Africa, in order to encourage and strengthen the standardization of geographical names across the continent. The Group of Experts will have before it the report of the Task Team for Africa, in which the Task Team details the activities carried out from 2017 to 2019, including participation in the annual meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa. The Group of Experts is invited to adopt the report of the Task Team and to provide guidance on the next phase of its work.

#### **Documentation**

Report of the Task Team for Africa (GEGN.2/2019/19)

Papers to be submitted by Member States and geographic and linguistic divisions

### **11. Toponymic education (Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy)**

The Group of Experts will have before it the report prepared by the Working Group in which it describes ongoing work with coordination of and assistance related to toponymy training courses organized by a host country, the Pan American Institute of Geography and History or the relevant division of the Group of Experts. The latest

developments in web-based training, such as the web course on toponymy, and the toponymy training manual will also be outlined.

#### **Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy (GEGN.2/2019/13)

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups

### **12. Toponymic terminology (Working Group on Toponymic Terminology)**

The Working Group was formed in 1989. It is responsible for preparing a glossary of toponymic terminology, reviewing updates to the glossary and establishing a functioning terminology database. There have been several editions of the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, the most recent of which was issued in 2002. At the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in New York in 2007, an addendum to the *Glossary* was approved.

The Group of Experts will have before it the report of the Working Group. In its report, the Working Group highlights its work in reviewing updates to the toponymic terminology glossary and establishing a functioning terminology database. The Group of Experts will also have before it relevant reports prepared by experts from across the divisions of the Group of Experts. The Group of Experts is invited to adopt the report of the Working Group and to provide guidance on the next phase of its.

#### **Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology (GEGN.2/2019/14)

### **13. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity including indigenous, minority and regional language names and multilingual issues (Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage)**

The Working Group was established in response to resolution VIII/I of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Berlin, Germany, in 2002. It was formerly known as the Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Place Names.

The aim of the Working Group is to oversee activities relating to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as a way to pursue the retention/revitalization of minority and indigenous group culture. The Working Group serves to bring a focus to the relationship between place names and cultural heritage and to assist countries in developing appropriate processes to ensure that the relationship is maintained. The Group of Experts will have before it the report of the Working Group. In its report, the Working Group highlights its work in fulfilling its current work plan. The Group of Experts will also have before it relevant reports prepared by experts from across the divisions related to the topic. The Group of Experts is invited to adopt the report of the Working Group and to provide guidance on the next phase of its work.

#### **Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage (GEGN.2/2019/15)

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups



**14. Exonyms  
(Working Group on Exonyms)**

The Working Group on Exonyms was formed in 2002, pursuant to resolution VIII/4 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The Group of Experts will have before it papers submitted by experts detailing the current trends in exonym use (pursuant to resolution III/18 of the Third United Nations Conference) as well as an update on the project to address an inventory of lists of exonyms (pursuant to resolutions II/28, II/29 and II/35 of the Second United Nations Conference and III/19 of the Third United Nations Conference). The Group of Experts is invited to review the documents submitted and to consider further work.

**Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Exonyms (GEGN.2/2019/16)

Papers to be submitted by Member States and working groups experts

**15. Toponymic data files and gazetteers (data processing and tools, database management, data dissemination: products and services)  
(Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers)**

Under item 15 of the provisional agenda, the following will be addressed: issues related to the structure and content of toponymic data files, the creation, maintenance and output of databases and gazetteers and aspects of toponymic data exchange formats and standards. The focus may be on technical topics, such as data collection supported by information technology, data categorization and data modelling and database (web) applications, or on more strategic topics, such as the promotion of better integration of geographical names information within national and international spatial data infrastructures and for the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The following may also be addressed: lessons learned through national and international geographical names programmes or projects and best practices, including for the technically supported exploitation and validation of volunteered geographic information and crowdsourced data as part of national toponymic standardization work.

**Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers (GEGN.2/2019/17)

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups

**16. Writing systems and pronunciation  
(Working Group on Romanization Systems)**

The Group of Experts will have before it, for discussion, the report prepared by the Working Group, in which it details the monitoring of the status of various romanization systems either being developed in countries using non-Roman script or the status of United Nations-approved systems being implemented in the countries concerned. Similarly, countries participating in the session may report on their progress in developing and implementing romanization systems for geographical names. Papers submitted may also deal with questions related to the pronunciation of geographical names.

**Documentation**

Report of the Working Group on Romanization Systems (GEGN.2/2019/18)

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups

**17. Other toponymic issues**

It is recognized that Member States, divisions and working groups of the Group of Experts will submit technical papers that do not logically fit under working group subjects related to the items on the agenda. With regard to item 17 of the provisional agenda, the Group of Experts will have before it papers within this category that are not relevant to other agenda items. Item 17 will be considered under the direction of the Chair.

**Documentation**

Papers to be submitted by Member States, geographic and linguistic divisions and working groups

**18. Arrangements for the 2021 session of the Group of Experts**

In accordance with rule 6 of the rules of procedure of the Group, as set out in Council decision 2018/264, the Group will consider its provisional agendas and proposed dates for the 2021 session at its next session. Representatives participating in the session may propose items for inclusion in, or amendments to, the provisional agenda.

**Documentation**

Provisional agenda for the 2021 session.

**19. Other business**

Member State and division representatives may wish to bring other matters to the attention of the Group of Experts.

**Documentation**

*No request for advanced documentation.*

**20. Presentation and adoption of decisions**

All proposals for consideration by the Group of Experts will be presented under this item. The Group of Experts will have before it an informal paper containing the draft decisions and resolutions submitted by the Rapporteurs and will be invited to adopt the draft decisions of the 2019 session.

**Documentation**

Informal paper with draft decisions.

**21. Adoption of the report on the 2019 session**

The Group of Experts will have before it the report on the 2019 session covering organizational matters relating to its work. The Group of Experts will be invited to adopt the report on the 2019 session, and to entrust the Rapporteur with streamlining and finalizing it for submission to the Economic and Social Council.

**Documentation**

Draft report of the Group of Experts on its 2019 session.

**22. Election of officers of the 2021 session**

The election of officers will proceed in accordance with rules 7 and 8 of the rules of procedure, as set out in Council decision 2018/264.

**Documentation**

*No documentation required.*

**23. Closing of the session**

In accordance with rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the Group of Experts, the Chair will declare the closing of each plenary meeting of the Group.

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