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## Expert Group to Convene in Bangkok for Session on Advancing Standardization of Geographical Names, 25-29 April

### PRESS RELEASE

NEW YORK, 21 April (United Nations Statistics Division) — The twenty-ninth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names will convene from 25 to 29 April, at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Conference Centre in Bangkok.

Organized by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the session will bring together more than 150 experts to discuss ways and means in which the standardization of geographical names in Asia and throughout the world is being advanced for the benefit of all citizens, Governments and non-governmental organizations. The twenty-ninth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names is being held in Asia for the first time. It aims to increase awareness of geographical name standardization in the region, to encourage the collection, storage and authorization of geographical names, and to promote international and regional cooperation in that field.

As one of the nine standing expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council, with more than 400 members from over 100 countries, the Group of Experts furthers the essential work of standardizing geographical names and facilitates the development and dissemination of principles, policies and methods suitable for achieving consistent use of geographical names. The Group carries out its work through the activities of 24 linguistic/geographical divisions and 10 working groups, as well as two special task teams.

The opening of the twenty-ninth session will begin at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, 25 April, with welcoming addresses expected from Hongjoo Hahm, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes of ESCAP, and Major General Suppalert Chaichana, Deputy Director of the Royal Thai Survey Department. William Watt, Chair of the Group of Experts, will officially open the session.

After the opening ceremony, the session will formally begin and continue over the next five days with presentations and discussions on more than 85 working papers covering such topics as implementation of resolutions, future operational modalities of the expert group, toponymic training, toponymic data files and gazetteers, romanization systems, exonyms, geographical names as cultural heritage, and toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use. Included in the session are a number of special presentations, two of which are “3 Word Addresses as a Global Location Reference System” by Steven Ramage from What3words, and “Innovation in Naming: Case Studies and Challenges for Geographic Names in 2016” by Patrick Jones from the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

The week will be chock-full of activities, including 15 side events during lunch breaks. They will include special workshops, working group and divisional meetings. With contributions of maps, posters and books from more than 12 Member States, an exhibition showcasing the work of authorities on geographical names will be mounted in the corridors of the conference centre for the duration of the session.

It is essential to national and international communications that we have accurate, clear and unambiguous nationally approved geographical names available, particularly with the growth of spatial data, in which geographical names now constitute a core element of geolocation. Geographical names are fundamental to almost every aspect of national life, from the creation of national data infrastructure in support of planning,

economic development and communications systems, through natural hazard prediction and coordination of emergency services to the creation of national coherence and unity, and allowing linguistic minorities a “spatial voice”.

For additional information on the twenty-ninth session, including the agenda, technical reports and webcast please visit

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnSession29.html>  
(<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnSession29.html>).

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