

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) was established in the 1960s to further the national standardization of geographical names and to promote the national and international benefits to be derived from standardization.

Between the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names held at five-year intervals, UNGEGN holds its own sessions and carries out its work through the activities of its Working Groups and linguistic/geographical Divisions. Your country can therefore benefit from the experience of specialists in other parts of the world.

UNGEGN facilitates the development and dissemination of principles, policies and methods suitable for resolving the problems of consistency in the use of geographical names. It encourages the collection of locally used names and their storage, authorization, dissemination and systematic romanization where necessary.

UNGEGN also provides a forum for dialogue between States Members of the United Nations and liaison with international organizations.

Representatives of all States Members of the United Nations can bring their experiences – best practices or difficulties – to UNGEGN sessions.

UNGEGN can help!

1. By providing advice and supplying literature to assist in the establishment of national names authorities and the advancement of national programmes of geographical names standardization.
2. By assisting in the development of appropriate training programmes designed to promote standardization of geographical names.
3. By assisting in obtaining funding to support trainee fellowships and provide consultants for training courses, and to help establish names authorities.
4. By providing a forum for discussion on the standardization of geographical names, encompassing the collection and national authorization of names, the development of names databases and gazetteer production.
5. By providing contacts with others who share regional or topical concerns on the administration of geographical names.

Consult the UNGEGN website

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo>

Contact:

UNGEGN Secretariat
Statistics Division, DESA
DC2-16th floor
United Nations
New York, NY 10017, USA
Fax: 1-212-963-4569
E-mail: Statistics@un.org

**Geographical names
as vital keys for
accessing information
in our globalized and
digital world**



Importance and use of geographical names

Geographical names are more than just place names on a map! They are an indispensable locational component of any spatially organized information system.

Names of places and features – like Nairobi, Mumbai, Bandung, Nuuk, Sierra Nevada, Lake Taupo and IJsselmeer – are keys to accessing our digital world ...

Geographical names constitute a direct and intuitive point of access to other information sources. They help enable the integration of digital data sets, which become essential and powerful decision-making tools for policymakers and managers, and aid cooperation among local, national and international organizations.

At both national and local levels, accurate and consistent geographical names are vital for the optimal use of geo-information in:

- Sustainable national planning strategies
- Economic development
- Environmental management
- Emergency services coordination
- Trade
- Cultural heritage promotion
- Utility infrastructures
- Tourism
- Communication systems
- Global media



Emergency services coordination

Geographical names are essential for successful use of any search engine where *place* is important.

Consistent standardized geographical names

National mapping and charting organizations spend a great deal of time and money on the collection, selection and application of up-to-date geographical names, while often similar – but uncoordinated – work is being carried out by other organizations and agencies. This duplication of effort and waste of resources may well lead to variations and conflicts regarding names usage.

Duplication of names and lack of clearly recorded names have resulted in confused instructions to emergency services and wasted time, which in turn have led to loss of life ...

It therefore makes sense for countries to develop a national programme that aims to reduce confusion through the standardization



Utility infrastructures

of geographical names for official use. The consolidation of effort, with less overall cost, will ultimately be of greater benefit to Governments, non-governmental organizations and the general public.

Food aid and earthquake assistance have been delayed or misdirected through lack of geographical names information or poorly geo-referenced names ...

The geographical names of all countries are now being used in global online data systems. Let us work to ensure that the names from each country are correctly recorded and authorized. *Can users around the world access the geographical names that appropriately reflect the cultures and heritage of your country?*

Maps, geo-referenced databases and geographic information systems (GIS) using standardized geographical names are essential to a nation's development in today's digital economy.

Delivery services can be made more efficient – leading to savings in time and money – through the use of clear and unambiguous place names ...

Geographical names are vital to presenting the practical results of spatial data analysis and interpretation – in such areas as tsunami warnings, danger of forest fires, loss of natural habitat and climate change vulnerability. In all such cases, geographical names are essential to the planning and provision of emergency and humanitarian aid.

As names may change (for example, in South Africa, Polokwane has replaced Pietersburg and in Canada, Iqaluit has replaced Frobisher Bay), information on such changes should be readily accessible for general use ...

Today, millions of users of the World Wide Web need the geographical names of your country. Can UNGEGN help those responsible for the availability and accuracy of this crucial national resource?



Communication systems