

**Strategic Plan 2021-2029****1. Vision**

Every country having a fully functioning and globally-aligned framework, based on common principles for national standardization of geographical names that identify location and respect the associated culture and heritage, and having these names easily accessible for national and international use.

2. Aims

- i. Facilitate the creation or improvement of national geographical names standardization principles, policies and procedures.
- ii. Raise awareness of the value and benefits of geographical names standardization.
- iii. Recognize, respect and promote the value of geographical names as significant elements of cultural heritage, language and identity.
- iv. Enhance, nationally and globally, the maintenance and dissemination of standardized geographical names data.
- v. Consider, contribute to and endorse a single standardized and scientific romanization system for each non-Roman language or script; systems are proposed by a (donor) country, and intended for international use. Recommend methods of writing geographical names from non-written languages.
- vi. Provide an active forum for Member States to exchange information, discuss and learn of good practices on the standardization of geographical names.
- vii. Provide leadership in the implementation of resolutions and recommendations adopted at the former United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and at the sessions of the Group of Experts.
- viii. Contribute geographical names expertise and advice to the work of other UN bodies, as well as to collaborate with relevant non-UN organizations.

3. Values**Collaborative, Respectful, Relevant, Influential:**

- i. We will work collaboratively, aiming at consensus-building and harmony;
- ii. We will protect and uphold the integrity of our outcomes, demonstrating respect, expertise, professionalism and political neutrality;
- iii. Our products will be solution-oriented, relevant, user-friendly, innovative, and fully and equitably accessible; and
- iv. We will share our knowledge, offer education, plan for succession, promote good practices and make an impact with our strategic direction.



4. Strategies

Strategy 1: Technical expertise

- i. Deliver technical expertise and advice to Member States for geographical names standardization, including romanization and geographical names data and gazetteer management;
- ii. Develop, extend and share the combined expertise of Member States and;
- iii. Incorporate innovative methods, integrated approaches, and technological advances to further the aims of UNGEKN.

Strategy 2: Relationships, links and connections

- i. Sustain and enhance existing collaboration with other programmes and bodies of the United Nations (such as UNECA, UNESCO, UN-GGIM, UNPFII, and the UN Document Management Section); support the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda for Transformation;
- ii. Sustain and build on current cooperation with non-United Nations scientific and academic bodies and;
- iii. Create other strategic partnerships (with United Nations and non-United Nations bodies) to meet new challenges.

Strategy 3: Effective work programmes

- i. Deliver products, policy guidance, and advice that support coordinated activities at national, divisional and international levels, taking note of our resolutions and recommendations;
- ii. Encourage active participation and promote compatible standards and methods in the work undertaken by Member States to contribute to UNGEKN's aims;
- iii. Ensure that UNGEKN's organizational structure is appropriate, relevant and impactful to deliver best value to Member States and;
- iv. Encourage exchange of data and experience between Member States to facilitate development of legislation and policies on geographical names standardization at the national level.

Strategy 4: Culture, heritage and language recognition

- i. Declare, promote, celebrate and demonstrate that geographical names matter because they recognize unique culture, heritage and language that connect people to physical locations;
- ii. Promote geographical naming practices that acknowledge people's place in the world; thus recognizing that geographical names are a source of identity, recognition of heritage and equality, and support indigenous and minority group language revitalization and;
- iii. Build technical capabilities, such as for developing guidelines, legislation and databases to enhance culture, heritage and language recognition.

Strategy 5: Promotion and capacity building

- i. Raise awareness of the importance of using standardized geographical names;
- ii. Enhance the visibility of UNGEKN through its publications, improved communications, outreach, networking and partnerships;
- iii. Assist Member States in their capability building, in the development and management of geographical names standardization and;



- iv. Develop funding strategies to enable UNGEGN to assist Member States in achieving national geographical names standardization.

5. Background to UNGEGN

Based on problems in the use of geographical names in UN cartography and communication, ECOSOC in 1959 passed resolution 715A (XXVII). This resolution requested the Secretary-General to encourage nations to have a national organization for the standardization of geographical names, to ensure central clearing-house functions, and to set up a small group of experienced consultants from interested Governments. A meeting of this group in 1960 led to the establishment of five-yearly conferences from 1967 to 2017 providing a forum to encourage national standardization, to promote international dissemination of the nationally standardized names, and to adopt single scientific romanization systems for all non-Roman languages or scripts. During this timeframe 30 sessions of UNGEGN (formalized in 1972 as a standing expert body of ECOSOC) were convened to follow up conference resolutions and to provide continuity.

For more than 50 years, UNGEGN established a cooperative framework and furthered geographical names standardization, nationally and internationally, through its nine technical working groups, two task teams and 24 geographical/linguistic divisions. Training courses, published manuals, promotional material, and national toponymic guidelines were among the outreach tools made widely available.

Over the years UNGEGN sessions and conferences have adapted as the technical environment expanded and changed. In 2017 the time was appropriate to review the conference and session structure and working methods to gain operational efficiencies, cost-saving, inter-operability, and more rapid ability for decision-making. As a result, the conferences and UNGEGN were discontinued and a new UNGEGN established (ECOSOC 2018/2) that would convene every two years starting in April 2019, with the existing mandates. UNGEGN has full authority to set its strategic direction and adopt resolutions to be submitted to ECOSOC.

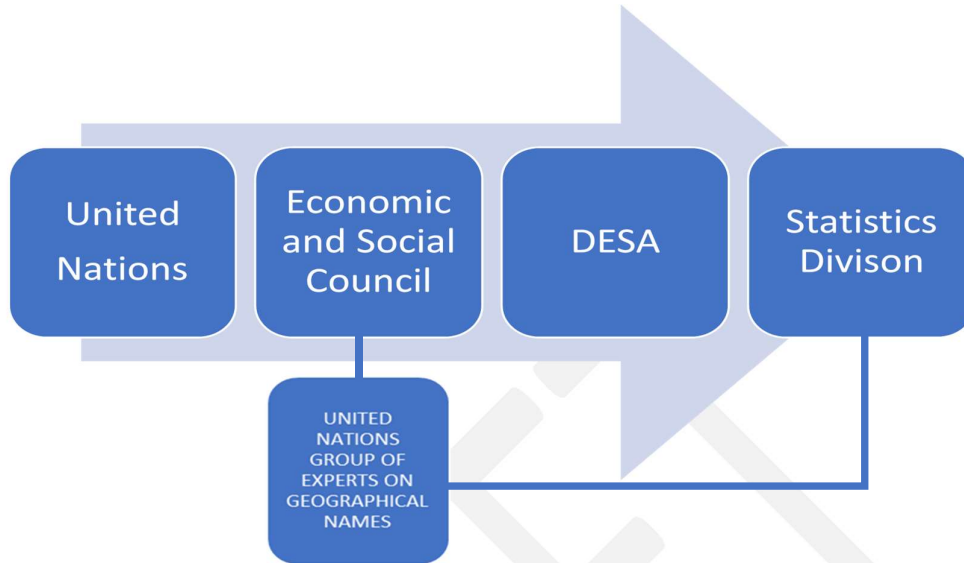
6. Outreach

As an expert body of ECOSOC, UNGEGN engages to strengthen communications with other UN bodies, providing advice on the use of standardized geographical names within their programmes; this in particular links to geospatial needs of UN-GGIM and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, as well as to the cultural heritage value of names relevant to a range of objectives and activities of the UN. As avoiding ambiguity in geographical names has economic and social benefits, and supports infrastructure development, UNGEGN also collaborates with non-UN international organizations, especially those with related scientific and technical interests. UNGEGN extends the promotion of its ideals and practices on standardization to the media and to the general public.



7. Organizational Structure

UN Organizational Line of Sight



Through its specialist, 11 [Working Groups and Task Teams](#), 24 [linguistic/geographical Divisions](#) and liaison officers UNGEGN facilitates the development and dissemination of principles, policies and procedures suitable for resolving the challenges of consistency in the authorization and use of geographical names.

8. UNGEGN Working Groups and Task Teams

1. Working Group on Country Names

To provide UNGEGN with a complete and regularly updated listing of country names in the language(s) of the country as well as in the six UN languages. To monitor changes in country names to maintain an up-to-date file of local official forms, to follow modifications in romanization systems for local official country names that use non-Roman scripts. To continue effectively liaising with the terminology team of the United Nations, to collect a list of country names from national or other official sources.

2. Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management (formerly known as Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers)

To address and propose structure and content of geographical names (toponymic) data files and gazetteers within the creation, maintenance and outputs including aspects of toponymic data exchange formats and standards. To promote a better integration of geographical names information within national and international spatial data infrastructures (SDIs) and for the Agenda 2030, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**3. Working Group on Toponymic Terminology**

To maintain and update a glossary and database of terminology related to geographical names standardization

4. Working Group on Publicity and Funding

To make the activities of UNGEGN more visible through publication and dissemination of material relevant to the advancement and understanding of geographical names. In addition, to seek and help identify funds to support, mainly within the areas of providing for training for the development and management of geographical names administration; establishment of names authorities; and not least, participation of delegates in UNGEGN events and activities.

5. Working Group on Romanization Systems

To consider and reach an agreement on a romanization system for geographical names for each non-Roman language or script. Systems are proposed by a (donor) country for implementation by the UN and member states.

6. Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

To increase awareness, knowledge and greater understanding across related technical groups on the importance, practices, techniques of names standardization through providing assistance in planning and delivery of international toponymy training courses. To publish toponymy training course information and maintain a web-based training course with instructional material.

7. Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

To evaluate the functioning and efficacy of UNGEGN, and the implementation of resolutions and recommendations, and find ways to involve member states and assist them to achieve geographical names standardization

8. Working Group on Exonyms

To encourage progress in addressing UNGEGN resolutions on the treatment of exonyms, by promoting further exploration on the classification of exonyms, recognition of exonyms as a part of the cultural heritage, and their standardization by publishing lists of exonyms.

9. Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

To oversee activities relating to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as means of cultural retention/revitalization. Also, to cover guidelines for field collection, gathering of models for promotion of these names and opening dialogue with other groups involved in this work.

A. Task Team for Africa

To promote the relevance of national geographical names standardization in African countries and to encourage the creation and development of national structures to achieve this standardization, addressing the needs of geo-information management while respecting the cultural heritage. Also, to cooperate with international organizations in Africa (e.g. UNECA, Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), African Development Bank) on approaches to advance geographical names standardization in Africa.



B. Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors for International Use

To encourage countries to publish and keep up-to date Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors. Toponymic guidelines include information about official, national and minority languages, names authorities, source material for toponyms, glossaries, abbreviations used on official maps and administrative divisions. The aim is to enable cartographers and editors of other countries to treat correctly the toponymy of countries that have produced such guidelines.

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