



**UN**

**Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

# **UNGEGN**

Strategic Plan and  
Programme of Work  
2021 - 2029



---

Document prepared by the UNGEGN Extended Bureau with support of UNSD, UNGEGN Secretariat

5 May 2021



# Contents

Foreword		3
	Message du Président	3
	Message from the Chair	4
	Message from the Director, UNSD/DESA	5
Executive Summary		7
Introduction		9
	Brief history of UNGEGN	9
	Outreach	9
	SWOT Analysis	9
Vision		11
Values		11
Aims		11
Strategies		12
	Strategy 1: Technical expertise	12
	Strategy 2: Relationships, links and connections	12
	Strategy 3: Effective work programmes	12
	Strategy 4: Culture, heritage and language recognition	12
	Strategy 5: Promotion and capacity building	13
	Alignment of strategies to the UN Sustainable Development Goals	13
Programme of work		14
	<b>Strategy 1: Technical expertise</b>	14
	Current status and assessment	14
	Action items, actors, output and time frame	15
	<b>Strategy 2: Relationships, links and connections</b>	17
	Current status and assessment	17
	Action items, actors, output and time frame	18
	<b>Strategy 3: Effective work programmes</b>	20
	Current status and assessment	20
	Action items, actors, output and time frame	21
	<b>Strategy 4: Culture, heritage and language recognition</b>	23
	Current status and assessment	23
	Action items, actors, output and time frame	24

	<b>Strategy 5: Promotion and capacity building</b>	27
	Current status and assessment	27
	Action items, actors, output and time frame	28
<hr/>		
<b>Implementation framework</b>		30
	Organization chart	30
	Membership, Bureau, Working groups, Task teams, Divisions	31
	Monitoring, reporting and evaluation	31
	Financing	31
<hr/>		
<b>Appendix</b>		32
	Linguistic or geographical divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names	32
<hr/>		
<b>Abbreviations</b>		33
	UNGEGN and its working groups	33
	United Nations and its bodies other than UNGEGN	34
	International organizations, commissions and academic groups	35
	Related terminologies	36

# Foreword



## Message du Président

Mal nommer un objet, c'est ajouter au malheur de ce monde<sup>1</sup>.

Les noms géographiques ont d'abord un but pratique, bien sûr, essentiellement en identifiant des lieux et des objets géographiques. La normalisation des noms produit donc des avantages pratiques, techniques et pécuniaires, tant par la structuration de l'information (intégration des données, production de cartes et d'atlas, statistiques et recensement, communications...) et de l'espace (planification urbaine et régionale, droits de propriété, cadastre...) que par l'utilité opérationnelle pour nous aider à nous déplacer d'un endroit à l'autre (acheminement de l'aide et des secours en cas de catastrophe, opérations de recherche et de sauvetage, navigation, affaires et commerce...).

Mais les noms géographiques ont également des significations sociales et identitaires en tant que patrimoine culturel et reflets de la diversité humaine. Ils donnent un sens à l'espace, reliant une histoire et des lieux, des événements aux endroits où ils se sont produits, et réactivant ou enrichissant notre culture patrimoniale et linguistique. Ils portent donc des enjeux socio-économiques (tourisme, développement durable, environnement et conservation) et même sociopolitiques (culture, patrimoine et langue, sens du lieu et identité sociale, et par conséquent sécurité et maintien de la paix).

La manière dont les noms géographiques sont traités et utilisés doit donc tenir compte de ces

considérations, qui concernent l'ensemble des Nations Unies. Il s'agit que les noms géographiques contribuent à l'efficacité de la communication et de l'administration publique, qu'ils permettent de relier les données à un large éventail d'objectifs publics et privés, et qu'ils accordent l'importance qui leur revient à la culture et au patrimoine.

Ce plan stratégique a pour but de guider le travail du GENUNG vers ces objectifs. Il a été élaboré sur la base d'un mandat du Conseil économique et social<sup>2</sup>. Conformément à ses principes, le GENUNG a mobilisé pour cela un grand nombre de ses membres pendant deux ans. Grâce à une consultation ouverte et mondiale des États membres, le Bureau a préparé un projet examiné et discuté avec les États membres en vue d'être adoptée à la session 2021 du GENUNG.

Je tiens à exprimer mes remerciements sincères et chaleureux aux États membres pour les contributions sur lesquelles le Bureau a travaillé, ainsi qu'aux membres du Bureau étendu et du Secrétariat qui ont collaboré pour structurer et rédiger ce document. Je me réjouis de relancer bientôt nos travaux sur cette base avec une vigueur renouvelée.

**Pierre Jaillard**  
Président du GENUNG

<sup>1</sup> Albert CAMUS, « Sur une philosophie de l'expression » [1944], Œuvres complètes, Paris, Gallimard, « Bibliothèque de la Pléiade », tome I, 2006, p. 908.

<sup>2</sup> Résolutions E/RES/2018/2 du 10 novembre 2017, paragraphes 1 et 4, et E/2018/L.25 du 18 juillet 2018, annexe I, I. Buts.

# Message from the Chair

Mal nommer un objet, c'est ajouter au malheur de ce monde<sup>3</sup>.

« To misname an object is adding to the misfortune of this world. »

Geographical names first have a practical purpose, of course, essentially by identifying locations and geographical objects. Therefore, names standardization produces practical, technical and pecuniary benefits, both by structuring information (data integration, map and atlas production, statistics and census, communications...) and space (urban and regional planning, property rights and cadastre...), and by operational utility in helping us to navigate from one place to another (aid delivery and disaster relief, search and rescue operations, navigation, business and trade...).

But geographical names also have social and identity meanings as cultural heritage and reflections of human diversity. They give context to space, linking history to places, events to the places where they occurred, and reviving or adding to our knowledge of the heritage and of languages diversity. They therefore denote socio-economic interests (tourism, sustainable development, environment and conservation) and even socio-political interests (culture, heritage and language, sense of place and social identity, and therefore security and peacekeeping).

The way in which geographical names are treated and used must therefore take into account these considerations, all of which concern the

United Nations. It is important that geographical names contribute to efficient communication and government administration, that they enable the linking of data for a wide range of public and private purposes, and that they give appropriate weight to culture and heritage.

This Strategic Plan and Programme of Work is intended to guide the work of UNGEGN to achieve those aims. It was developed on the basis of a mandate from the Economic and Social Council<sup>4</sup>. In accordance with its principles, UNGEGN mobilized many of its members over two years. On the basis of an open and global consultation of Member States, the Bureau prepared a draft, reviewed and discussed by Member States, to be approved at the 2021 UNGEGN session.

I would like to express my sincere and warmest thanks to Member States for the contributions on which the Bureau has worked, and to the members of the Expanded Bureau and the Secretariat who collaborated to structure and draft this document. I look forward to re-launching soon our work on this basis with renewed vigour.

**Pierre Jaillard**  
Chair UNGEGN

<sup>3</sup> Albert CAMUS, « Sur une philosophie de l'expression » [1944], Œuvres complètes, Paris, Gallimard, « Bibliothèque de la Pléiade », vol. I, 2006, p. 908.

<sup>4</sup> Resolutions E/RES/2018/2 of November 10 2017, paragraphs 1 et 4, and E/2018/L.25 of July 18 2018, annex I, I. Aims.

# Message from the Director, United Nations Statistics Division



Dear Colleagues,

As the responsible United Nations Secretariat, I have had the honour of being actively involved with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) since 2002. Over the years, I have observed that this expert body is not only unique in its discipline, but also in its form and functions, which sets it apart from other inter-governmental bodies of its parent, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). UNGEGN has a long and rich history, beginning in 1967, of leading national geographical names standardization in jurisdictions around the world. The architecture in which UNGEGN conducts its work, is comprised of a bureau, nine working groups, two special task teams, 24 linguistic/geographical divisions, and officers to nine liaison international and regional technical bodies. Another unique feature of UNGEGN, is the seating arrangements at biennial sessions. For procedural matters, delegates are seated in alphabetical order by Member States. However, given its strong technical moorings, for substantive technical discussions, seating is arranged by linguistic and geographical divisions.

In 2017, precipitated by a need to reform and modernize its operations, to be more agile and aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda and the work of ECOSOC, a reset button was pressed. At its 11th Conference in 2017, the Group of Experts adopted by consensus, a resolution to rationalize its operations, which was later approved by ECOSOC in 2018. This heralded several changes to the working methods of this expert body, which included merging the strategic

and reporting functions of the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographic Names and UNGEGN into a single meeting structure, with meetings to be held every two years over 5 days. New Rules of Procedure and agenda items were subsequently prepared and approved.

In continuation of this reform process, at its first session in 2019, the Group of Experts adopted a recommendation, to undertake the development of a draft strategic plan and programme of work for UNGEGN, with a view for it to be presented for consideration at its second session in May 2021. With this, it gives me great pleasure to have been able to contribute with the expert team who has guided the preparation of what is now a comprehensive draft Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029.

This draft Strategic Plan and Programme of Work for the next eight years is timely, and an appropriate step in the UNGEGN reform process. Further, I believe it is the first of its kind, prepared by the Group of Experts.

Contained herein, is two years of diligent and comprehensive work from the UNGEGN Bureau, its Working Group Conveners and the UNGEGN Secretariat. This effort was reinforced with the input from the global UNGEGN community through three rounds of global consultations and a virtual side event meeting. The preparation process, which I have had the opportunity to observe and support, has been robust, transparent, and inclusive.

The draft Strategic Plan and Programme of Work, is a living document, prepared at an appropriate

juncture in the revitalization and renewal of the Group of Experts, a “new” UNGEGN. In the medium term it should: guide the work of the Expert Group, provide a forward and focused vision, direct the prioritization of activities, allow for more effective communication within the group and across its stakeholders, strengthen the groups accountability, and deepen the impact of its work. We hope that with approval and implementation, UNGEGN will realize increased operational efficiency and more effective allocation of resources. Importantly, national geographical names authorities may consider using UNGEGN’s Strategic Plan as a guide to fashion the preparation and alignment of their own plans and work programmes.

Successful and robust plans and work programmes must be continuously monitored, evaluated and revised to adjust to internal and external changes along the way, it is an ongoing process—not a one-time activity. I am pleased to recognize the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation controls in the implementation component of the document. Noting that the Bureau’s work continues with the need to define and implement over the next two years, a good monitoring evaluation strategy, one which will give the Group of Experts strengthened legitimacy and provide accountability for its work.

The approval of this draft Strategic Plan and Programme of Work is the continuation of the journey in the life of the “new” UNGEGN. There is more to be done, which includes a review and restructuring of the Working Groups and Task Teams. This would ensure that the mechanisms are in place to execute the work items in the programme of work. Another item for future work includes the establishment of the UNGEGN trust fund. All work programmes need resources for effective and efficient implementation, monitoring and overall sustainability. Corollary activities such as identification of initiatives to be resourced, and the identification of donors to contribute to the fund, are necessary. Of course, there are well-understood

UN guidelines to inform the management and regulatory arrangements necessary for such a trust fund. The UN Statistics Division stands ready to provide direction and guidance to the Group of Experts in the drive towards the creation of the fund.

I encourage the Group of Experts, its members, divisional chairs, liaison offices and stakeholders to become familiar with the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work, identify the areas of work to which you will be able to contribute, engage with and join Working Groups and Task Teams to support the implementation of the plan and thereby achieve the objectives of UNGEGN. In closing, I urge our toponymists and geographical names experts to stay focused on achieving the vision of the Group of Experts, which is embodied in its Strategy and Programme of work, which is to guide and support countries to have a fully functioning and globally-aligned structure and policy framework, based on common principles for national standardization of authorized geographical names that identify location and respect the associated culture and heritage, and to have these names easily accessible for national and international use - facilitating consistent worldwide use of geographical names to foster communication and cooperation.

Thank you, the drafters and UNGEGN stakeholders who contributed to the preparation, review, and finalization of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work, you have given the time and effort needed to arrive at this plateau. With continued strong leadership, communication, engagement of its stakeholders, collaboration and partnerships and reassessment, UNGEGN will succeed in achieving its objectives, and we as the UN Secretariat of UNGEGN stand ready to fully support UNGEGN in this journey.

**Stefan Schweinfest**  
Director UNSD/DESA



# Executive summary

The 'new' United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 20/18/2 in November 2017, replacing both the United Nations five-yearly Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the former UNGEGN.

Recommendation 1 of the first session of the new UNGEGN held in New York, 29 April to 3 May 2019, adopted by ECOSOC as decision E/2019/230 (dated 23/7/2019), approved the development of a draft strategic plan and programme of work to be undertaken by the UNGEGN Bureau:

## Recommendation 1

The Economic and Social Council:

- (a) Decides that, in close consultation with States Members of the United Nations, the Bureau of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names should undertake the development of a draft strategic plan and programme of work for the new Group of Experts, which, inter alia, should take into account:
  - i. The mandate and structure of the Group;
  - ii. Support for the creation of new national geographical names authorities and strengthening the operation of existing ones;
  - iii. The establishment of funding mechanisms (such as a trust fund) to support the implementation of the strategic plan;

- iv. Appropriate branding and publicity for the Group;
- v. The focus and core goals of its parent body, the Economic and Social Council;
- vi. A suitable planning time frame;

- (b) Also decides that the draft strategic plan and programme of work shall be circulated to Member States for consideration prior to adoption at the second session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

Accordingly, the Bureau in cooperation with convenors of the current Working Groups has prepared the draft Strategic Plan for the period 2021 to 2029, in consultation with Member States, who have been formally consulted three times. The first consultation, at the start of the exercise in October 2019, asked Member States to identify national geographical names standardization issues and priority actions. The second consultation in June 2020, invited Member States to review and provide comments on the first draft of the Strategic Plan. Based on the feedback received, the Bureau prepared a revised version of the draft Strategic Plan, which was combined with the first draft of the Programme of Work and circulated in February 2021 for the third round of consultation. Taking into account the review comments received, input from a webinar briefing and consultation with Member States in March 2021, the Strategic Plan was updated for presentation and ratification at the 2nd UNGEGN Session in May 2021.

---

This Strategic Plan presents the vision, values and aims of UNGEGN, together with the following five strategies and their collective alignment to the relevant goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



**Technical expertise**



**Relationships, links and connections**



**Effective work programmes**



**Culture, heritage and language recognition**



**Promotion and capacity building**

For each strategy, the main achievements, current status and future needs are noted, followed by the presentation of the Programme of Work responsibilities, outputs and timeframes up to 2029.

Two sections of the document are devoted to monitoring, reporting and evaluation and financing. In addition, the document includes a brief history of UNGEGN, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, the current organization chart, and implementation framework.

Discussion of appropriate changes to the working groups, task teams or divisional structure to address the Strategic Plan implementation will follow.

# Introduction



## Brief History of UNGEGN

ECOSOC resolution 715A (XXVII) of 1959 encouraged nations to have a national authority for the standardization of geographical names and to set up a group of experienced consultants from interested governments. Since the first meeting of this group in 1960, 30 sessions have been held, with the name UNGEGN formalized in 1972. From 1967 to 2017, 11 five-yearly conferences were convened, providing forums to encourage national standardization, to promote international dissemination, and to endorse a single standardized and scientific romanization system for each non-Roman-script language.

For over 50 years, UNGEGN established a cooperative framework, followed up conference resolutions and promoted geographical names standardization, through its geographical/linguistic divisions and topical working groups, publications, website and training activities.

In 2017, the time was appropriate to review the conference and session structure and working methods with a view to operational efficiencies, cost-savings and improved decision making. As a result, the conferences and UNGEGN were discontinued and a new UNGEGN was established (ECOSOC 2018/2), to be convened every two years starting in 2019, with the existing mandates. UNGEGN now has full authority to set its strategic direction and adopt resolutions to be submitted to ECOSOC.

## 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, through its media kit, publications, website and interviews, and is increasing outreach through social media.

## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats was undertaken to consider internal and external factors affecting UNGEGN's current situation and its future operations. The following SWOT diagram was created by the UNGEGN Bureau and Secretariat. It assisted the Bureau to understand UNGEGN's status and provided a framework that helped to guide preparation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work.

## UNGEGN's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

### Strengths

1. Cadre of dedicated experts with wide expertise covering all aspects of geographical names standardization from government and academia.
2. Over fifty years of experience and a robust architecture that provides forums for networking, discussions and sharing.
3. An active Bureau and a structure for Divisions and Working Groups with strong Secretariat support particularly between sessions.
4. A strong and extensive knowledge base consisting of resolutions, romanization, principles, guidelines and publications that supports current and future work.

### Weaknesses

1. Socio-economic, political, security and health situations, preventing Member States from prioritizing the promotion of geographical names.
2. Lack of resources to assist Member States that have low levels of geographical names standardization or to support their participation.
3. UNGEGN's activities and work on standardization and on romanization is not well known and understood by others in related disciplines.
4. Inconsistent engagement with bodies and organizations that deal with global geographical names.
5. Continued political issues in sessions and an unreliable coping mechanism.

### Opportunities

1. Utilize the momentum of the "new" UNGEGN to encourage geographical names standardization.
2. Increase recognition of the cultural and linguistic aspects of geographical names, and of the relevance of geographical names to social issues.
3. Increase collaboration and partnership with UN departments and agencies and other UN ECOSOC bodies, capitalizing on the increased focus on UN SDGs.
4. Leverage and strengthen the relationship with UN- GGIM to raise the profile both of UNGEGN and geographical names standardization.
5. Leverage social media to strengthen communication and increase publicity.
6. Promote the teaching of geographical names issues in relevant subject areas in universities.

### Threats

1. Unauthoritative geographical names data that are more easily sourced are used by governments and the public.
2. Standardized geographical naming good practices are not upheld by all Member States.
3. Financial and pandemic restrictions impede in-person sessions, capacity building and regional/thematic activities.
4. Loss of expertise of long-serving members.

# Vision

Every country to have a fully functioning and globally-aligned structure and policy framework, based on common principles for national standardization of authorized geographical names that identify location and respect the associated

culture and heritage, and to have these names easily accessible for national and international use - facilitating consistent worldwide use of geographical names to foster communication and cooperation.

# Values

Inclusive, Collaborative, Respectful, Relevant, Influential:

- I. We will work inclusively and 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 and outcomes 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.

# Aims

- I. Raise awareness of the value and benefits of national and international geographical names standardization;
- II. Facilitate the creation or improvement of national geographical names standardization principles, policies and procedures;
- III. Recognize, respect and promote the value of geographical names as significant elements of cultural heritage, language and identity, including those of indigenous peoples and regional and minority groups;
- IV. Enhance, nationally, regionally 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 script language; systems are proposed by donor countries, 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, including their use in geographic information systems;
- 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. Be recognized as the main source of expertise on a global level on standardization of geographical names for Member States;
- IX. Contribute geographical names expertise and advice to the work of other United Nations bodies, including those addressing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, taking note of their suggestions;
- X. Collaborate with relevant non-United Nations organizations; and
- XI. Involve relevant stakeholders to contribute to the standardization of geographical names and to promote their use.

# Strategies



## Strategy 1: Technical expertise

- i. Deliver technical expertise and advice to interested parties in Member States for geographical names standardization, including romanization and quality geographical names data and gazetteer management as well as interoperability;
- ii. Develop, extend and share good data management practices of Member States; and
- iii. Identify trends on developments and future direction for geographical names data management and encourage the use of innovative methods, integrated approaches and technological advances to further the aims of UNGEGN.

## Strategy 2: Relationships, links and connections

- i. Strengthen UNGEGN's existing collaboration vis-à-vis other United Nations activities (including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and programmes of UNECA, UNESCO, UN-GGIM and UNPFII);
- ii. Collaborate with non-United Nations scientific, technical, and academic bodies to provide expertise on geographical names standardization and create synergy to promote the work of UNGEGN and UN Member States; and
- iii. Create new strategic partnerships with different stakeholders (both UN and non-UN bodies) to address the needs of UNGEGN as new challenges emerge.

## Strategy 3: Effective work programmes

- i. Encourage active participation and promote compatible standards and methods in the work undertaken by Member States to contribute to UNGEGN's aims;
- ii. Deliver products, outcomes, policy guidance and advice that support coordinated activities at national, divisional and international levels, taking note of UNGEGN resolutions and recommendations and leveraging social media, mobile applications and web-based tools;
- iii. Ensure that UNGEGN's organizational structure is appropriate, efficient, relevant and impactful to deliver maximum value to Member States; and
- iv. Encourage exchange of knowledge, good practices and experience among Member States, aided by Divisions and Working Groups, 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 good geographical naming practices that acknowledge people's place in the world;
- iii. Recognize that geographical names are a source of identity, encourage recognition of

heritage and equality, and support indigenous, regional and/or minority groups' language revitalization and preservation; and

- iv. Contribute to building technical capabilities, such as developing guidelines, legislation, communication tools 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 and their role as a crucial element of geospatial information;
- ii. Enhance the visibility of UNGEGN through its publications, improved communications, outreach, networking and partnerships;
- iii. Assist Member States in their capacity building and 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.

### **Alignment of Strategies to the UN Sustainable Development Goals**

UNEGN recognizes the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address global challenges, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice.

The monitoring of SDGs should be adequately supported by thematic analyses based on a set of geospatial data, of which geographical names are a core element. Therefore, optimizing the use of nationally authorized geographical names should be a prerequisite, for which UNGEGN's expertise will be advantageous. This use of nationally standardized geographical names applies to all seventeen SDGs.

UNEGN, through cultural, heritage and language recognition will help meet the "Transformation: leave no one behind" agenda including the poorest and most vulnerable, and Member States in need of special attention. Particularly, UNGEGN will contribute to achieving Goal 11.4 "Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage."

Promoting UNGEGN principles for standardizing geographical names by means of assistance, capacity building, inclusive participation in UNGEGN meetings and democratic dissemination of UNGEGN principles and issues is an underlying factor for success in:

- Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- Establishing resilient infrastructure.
- Reducing inequality within and among Member States.
- Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.
- Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Dissemination of UNGEGN principles and standards for geographical names helps strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Connections with other relevant UN bodies will be pursued to ensure that UNGEGN is managing its contribution to achieving relevant UN-SDGs.

# Programme of work



## Strategy 1: Technical Expertise

- i. Deliver technical expertise and advice to interested parties in Member States for geographical names standardization, including romanization, quality geographical names data and gazetteer management as well as interoperability;
- ii. Develop, extend and share good practices of Member States; and
- iii. Identify trends on developments and future direction for geographical names data management and encourage the use of innovative methods, integrated approaches and technological advances to further the aims of UNGEGN.

### Current status and assessment

UNGEGN has promoted and provided policy, consultancy and technical advice to national standardization programmes on geographical names collection, management and dissemination, to training courses as well as on innovation and research activities. This has comprised the support of multipurpose database solutions as an essential part of spatial data infrastructures for national, regional and global use in the context of a broader geospatial information management:

### Workshops and Training Courses

- Training Courses on Toponymy have been supported with contributions to technical issues like data modelling, interoperability, database applications etc. conveying the message of standardized geographical names data being essential within a national geospatial information management.
- Workshops have been organized in conjunction with UNGEGN sessions focusing on topics like data collection, categorization and modelling, interoperability, database applications or lessons

learned through national and international geographical names programmes or projects.

- Presentations have been given on geographical names data management topics at international events.

### Databases and applications

- Advice has been provided to the improvement of the Geographical Names Database of UNGEGN (UNGEGN database).
- The 'UNECA Africa GeoNyms database/gazetteer initiative' has been promoted, complemented and supported, mainly within Training Courses on Toponymy.
- The establishment of regional databases/ gazetteers of geographical names (like in Europe or in Asia and Pacific) has been promoted.

### Data integration methods

- Policy, consultancy and technical advice have been provided to the UN-GGIM activities related to the fundamental data theme 'Geographical Names'.
- Advice has been provided for the integration of



geographical names data into the monitoring of sustainable development goals (SDGs) according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- The use of persistent unique identifiers has been promoted as a crucial element of consistent geographical names within a wider geospatial information management.
- Agreements on the use of certain romanization systems within the UN have been achieved to enable systematic transfer between non-Roman script languages and a romanized form; information has been shared on other romanization systems available where a UN-approved system has not been agreed.
- The use of Unicode consortium encodings has been supported for a correct data transfer of all

characters and diacritics (including those beyond the 26 basic letters of a Roman alphabet).

**Some further needs:** The cooperation with and the contribution to activities of other UN bodies and Member States on cross-sectional tasks and issues like ‘Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

monitoring’ or ‘Linked (Open) Data’ have to be strengthened and supported. Clarity and assistance on the implementation and use of UN-agreed romanization systems have to be promoted further – both within the donor country and at the global implementation level. In general, geographical names data management has to be discussed in close relation with issues of romanization and of cultural heritage, language and minorities.

### Action items, actors, output and time frame

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
1-i-1	Provide consultancy to the developments related to the UNGEGN database, UNCEA “UNCEA Africa GeoNyms database/gazetteer initiative”, the INSPIRE initiative, the UN and European gazetteer projects, the GIS web-based World Geonames Application and other projects of developing countries.	Bureau, WG GNDM, Task Team of Africa.	Report on progress for each UNGEGN session to 2029 (if appropriate to be included in the report of the WG GNDM).  Contributions to training courses on Toponymy to be assessed annually.
1-i-2	Evaluate and assess exchange standards for geographical names information and for web services (gazetteer, feature and mapping) for the provision of geographical names information.  (comprising the review of Part II of the UNGEGN Technical Reference Manual).	WG GNDM.	Report on exchange standards in 2023.
1-i-3	Present geographical names data management topics at national and international conferences organized in the fields of geospatial information management.	WG GNDM.	Assess annually.
1-i-4	Promote, agree and disseminate romanization systems for national and global use.	WG GNDM, WG GNCH, WG RS.	Assess annually.
1-i-5	Promote and support the establishment of an authoritative international database/gazetteer of geographical names to be disseminated to the public through UNGEGN.	Bureau, WG GNDM, WG GNCH, WG RSs.	Report on opportunities for an international database/gazetteer activity in 2023.

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
1-ii-6	<p>Examine processes and recommend good practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. on how single and multi- jurisdictional Member States record, store, disseminate and manage their geographical names.</li> <li>b. for the reuse and validation of volunteered geographic Information, crowd sourced data and Linked Open Data (LOD) as part of national geographical names standardization work.</li> <li>c. for the use of standardized geographical names as fundamental data theme in national spatial data infrastructures (SDIs) within the monitoring of the SDG indicator framework in order to analyze and monitor the changes in a country.</li> </ul>	WG GNDM, WG GNCH, WG RS.	Report on good practices for each UNGEGN session to 2029.
1-ii-7	<p>Promote the use of the online discussion forum (Wiki) e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. on the relationship UNGEGN – UN-GGIM or SDG indicator monitoring.</li> <li>b. on data modelling and database design.</li> <li>c. on general issues in the context of data maintenance (like feature classifications).</li> <li>d. on geographical names data production and distribution in the context of national, regional or global Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs).</li> </ul>	WG GNDM.	Assess annually.
1-iii-8	<p>Monitor the availability of free and easily-accessible authorized digital geographical names data as it is seen as a key driver in encouraging the use of nationally-standardized geographical names.</p>	WG GNDM.	Assess annually.
1-iii-9	<p>Organize workshops and on innovative, research and/or technical issues/topics like e.g. volunteered geographic information, crowd sourced data, Linked Open Data or speech technology.</p>	WG GNDM, WG GNCH.	Workshops in 2022-2025 (likely in conjunction with Division meetings).
1-iii-10	<p>Evaluate and assess innovative methods to be used for Romanization, e.g. machine transliteration.</p>	WG RS.	Report on innovative methods for Romanization for each UNGEGN session to 2029.



## Strategy 2: Relationships, links and connections

- i. Strengthen UNGEGN's existing collaboration vis-à-vis other UN activities (including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and programmes of UNECA, UNESCO, UN-GGIM and UNPFII);
- ii. Collaborate with non-UN scientific, technical, and academic bodies to provide expertise on geographical names standardization and create synergy to promote the work of UNGEGN and UN Member States; and
- iii. Create new strategic partnerships with different stakeholders (both UN and non-UN bodies) to address needs of UNGEGN as new challenges emerge.

### Current status and assessment

UNGEGN has initiated and maintained to varying degrees, links with UN departments and agencies and non-UN scientific/technical organizations and groups, with either formal or informal liaison structures. Liaison with many groups has been active and effective, leading to provision of advice on the appropriate use of geographical names.

### UN departments/agencies

- ECOSOC: UNGEGN has reported through the UNCSGNs or directly following sessions.
- UNESCO and UNPFII: special presentations at UNCSGNs; individual Member States considered geographical names for recognition as intangible cultural heritage.
- UNECA: cooperation to further standardization of geographical names in countries of Africa; Task Team for Africa participated at meetings in Addis Ababa; UNECA organized a geographical names forum in Botswana and created Africa Geonyms - free database/gazetteer software for Member States' use.

- UN-GGIM: established cooperation to address Agenda 2030 and SDGs, including provision of advice on fundamental data theme of "Geographical Names" and ongoing contribution as members of the UN-GGIM Working Group on Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes.
- UN Documentation Division: recent liaison to advise on geographical names use within the UN; past interaction with terminology staff regarding country names data in UNTERM.
- WHO, UNGIS, OCHA, HABITAT, UNEP, UN Map Library: informal links and individuals have participated in UNGEGN sessions.

### Non-UN commissions and organizations

Participation and leadership of UNGEGN experts in academic conferences of scientific bodies, so promoting the work of UNGEGN:

- ICA: long-established liaison; achievements such as on-line Toponymy Training Course and collaborated to establish ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy.

- ICOS: a strong link, particularly for academic UNGEGN experts; UNGEGN experts have contributed to and edited issues of “Onoma”, presented at Congresses, and the terminology groups of the organizations have cooperated for common good.
- IGU: collaborated to establish ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy.

Monitoring of and contribution to international standards pertinent to geographical names and associated databases:

- ICANN: provided advice on proposed domain name submissions.
- IHO: formal liaison, with particular cooperation on undersea and maritime feature names, for example SCUFN and its documentation.
- Unicode Consortium and OGC: formal liaison arranged for encoding and exchange standards.
- ISO: UNGEGN has Class A Liaison status with TC211 (Geographic Information/Geomatics); an UNGEGN expert currently chairs TC46/WG3 (Conversion of Written Languages); UNGEGN experts are also participating in the work of other ISO groups (e.g. TC46/WG2 - Coding of Country Names and related entities).
- SCAR: liaison for data in the Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica; advised on naming principles .

Links to groups providing toponymic training in keeping with UNGEGN’s needs:

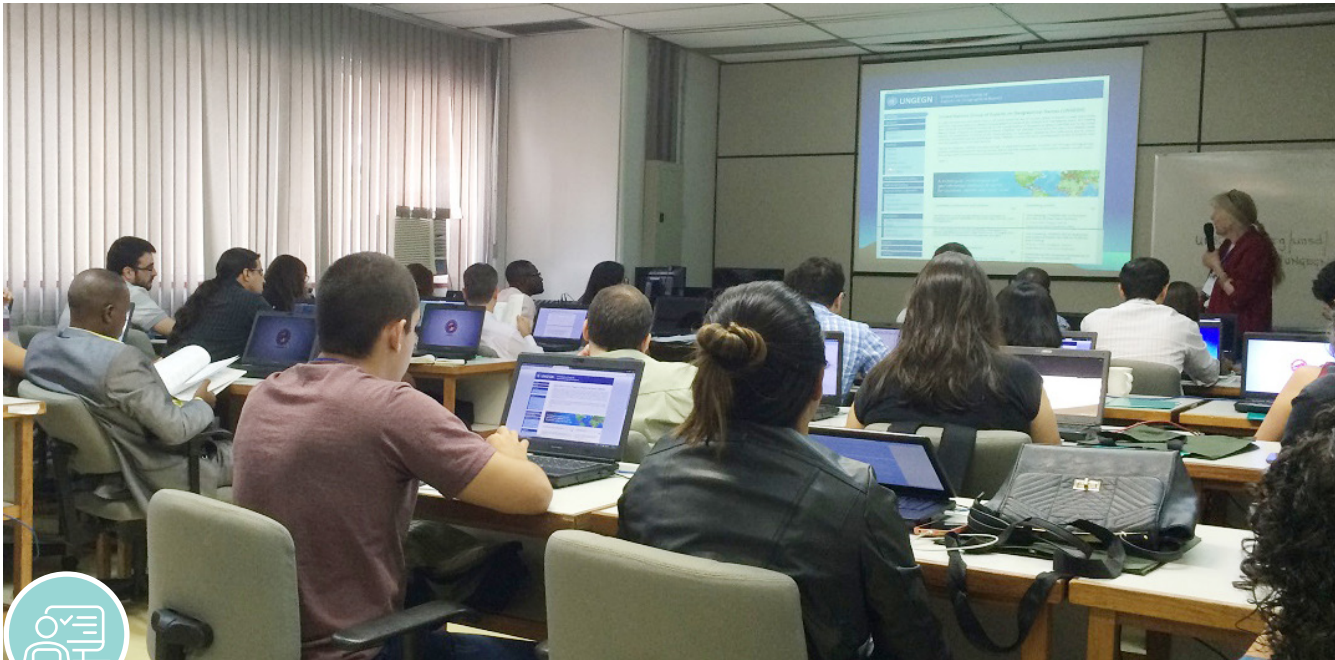
- PAIGH: liaison with regard to toponymy training courses (Central & South America; in Spanish) Initiation of other links.
- Google Earth™: representatives have regularly attended UNGEGN sessions and made special presentations; individual Member States have as a result established contacts to ameliorate their national geographical names data used by Google™.
- ICIPN: liaison with the Council was established in 2010, but only informal in nature.
- IMO, World Bank, ESRI, FIG: informal links; individuals have participated at UNGEGN sessions.

**Some further needs:** Some links should be strengthened, a wider liaison network needs establishing and more “persuasion” is likely required for user groups to access and use nationally standardized geographical names. Greater cooperation is now required within the UN framework, creating a stronger link with ECOSOC and fostering cooperation with UNECA to further the standardization of geographical names in Africa. A formal liaison is requested by IGU, similar to that with ICA.

## Action items, actors, output and time frame

No.	Action items	Actors/responsibility	Output and time frame
2-i-1	UNGEKN Bureau to contribute to ECOSOC requirements and to assess annually contributions to the UN-HLPPF and the themes determined by ECOSOC for annual focus, and Agenda 2030.	Chair, Bureau.	Assess requirements annually.
2-i-2	Interaction with UN-GGIM to be continuously reviewed and evaluated for upgrading the activity level in relation to over-arching activities, such as addressing the SDGs.	Chair, Bureau, WG GNDM.	Assess relevant activities annually.
2-i-3	Work with UNECA to establish stronger and more permanent ties aimed to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase national geographical names standardization in Africa.</li> <li>Re-activate the Gaborone Action Plan (GAP) initiated with UNECA.</li> <li>Re-activate Africa GeoNyms project to provide free database/gazetteer software to countries in Africa.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task Team for Africa, UNGEGN Divisions in Africa.</li> <li>Task Team for Africa, UNGEGN Divisions in Africa.</li> <li>Task Team for Africa, UNGEGN Divisions in Africa, WG GNDM.</li> </ol>	a, b and c: Re-establish ties in 2021 Develop workable programmes and establish goals by 2023. Report progress for each UNGEGN session to 2029.

No.	Action items	Actors/responsibility	Output and time frame
2-i-4	<p>Further explore links with UNESCO to:</p> <p>a. Find a path to recognition of geographical names as a part of intangible cultural heritage of Member States.</p> <p>b. Cooperate in recognition of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL), 2022-2032.</p>	Bureau, WG GNCH, Member States.	<p>a. Develop practical links with UNESCO regarding intangible cultural heritage by 2025.</p> <p>b. Liaise with the Global Task Force of IDIL to establish possible areas of cooperation by 2023.</p>
2-i-5	Build on existing initiatives and cooperation to enhance the use of nationally-standardized geographical names and to provide advice to the UN Documentation Division and UN managers of SALB.	UNGEEN Bureau, WG RS, WG CN.	Establish ongoing liaison with UN Documentation Division and with UN managers of SALB in 2021.
2-ii-6	Continue to communicate and liaise with existing groups and explore further effective ways of cooperation with: ICA, ICOS, IGU, IHO, ISO, OGC, PAIGH, SCAR (SCAGI), Unicode Consortium.	Existing liaison arrangements, individual Member States, individual experts.	Explore more formal arrangement with IGU (as requested) by 2023.
2-iii-7	Encourage collaboration with academia to ensure continued availability of expertise in fields required to strengthen geographical names standardization.	WG PF, WG CH, WG TC, Member States.	Establish goals by 2023, report to each UNGEEN session afterwards.
2-iii-8	Initiate appropriate links with UNPFII, ICIPN and other indigenous groups to enhance UNGEEN's understanding of the significance of geographical names to indigenous peoples and the retention of their languages.	WG GNCH, individual Member States.	Initiate links and establish suitable ongoing communication with UNPFII by 2023.
2-iii-9	Establish cooperation with sub- groups/ initiatives of UN-GGIM (e.g. CARIGEO) to help create or enhance national standardization of geographical names worldwide.	WG P&F; WG TC.	Determine UN-GGIM sub- groups/ initiatives that are related to geographical names by 2023 (ongoing).
2-iii-10	To enhance the understanding of the aims and work of UNGEEN, to provide advice on geographical names use or on accessibility of data and contacts, there should be an effort to reach out to a wider world of potential geographical names users and to encourage their participation at UNGEEN Sessions. This would include UN and non-UN bodies that may be unfamiliar with UNGEEN's purpose.	Appoint an individual point person or WG P&F.	Ongoing activity, with reporting to UNGEEN sessions to 2029.



### Strategy 3: Effective work programmes

- i. Encourage active participation and promote compatible standards and methods in the work undertaken by Member States to contribute to UNGEGN's aims;
- ii. Deliver products, outcomes, policy guidance and advice that support coordinated activities at national, divisional and international levels, taking note of UNGEGN resolutions and recommendations and leveraging social media, mobile applications and web-based tools;
- iii. Ensure that UNGEGN's organizational structure is appropriate, efficient, relevant and impactful to deliver maximum value to Member States; and
- iv. Encourage exchange of knowledge, good practices and experience among Member States, aided by Divisions and Working Groups, to facilitate development of legislation and policies on geographical names standardization at the national level.

#### Current status and assessment

UNGEGN has initiated and maintained to varying degrees, links with UN departments and agencies and non-UN scientific/technical organizations and groups, with either formal or informal liaison structures. Liaison with many groups has been active and effective, leading to provision of advice on the appropriate use of geographical names.

#### Participation, products, outcomes, policy guidance and advice

- An increasing number of Member States have participated in the former Conferences and sessions so far, established common principles of the standardization of geographical names, shared their experiences, and benefited from good practices of others. However, there are still Member States which have not yet participated and/or have problems in participating due to lack of awareness, funding, etc.
- Products of more than fifty-years of geographical names standardization have been published or compiled and are available from the UNGEGN website, including reports of meetings, individual working papers, special presentation materials, three manuals (basic, technical and training), a glossary of terms (with a searchable database), a list of country names, the World Geographical Names database and Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors of more than 40 Member States (links provided). Publications need to be reviewed for possible updating to accommodate current trends of geographical names standardization. Toponymic Guidelines are expected to be available from an extended number of Member States.
- Resolutions adopted at the eleven former Conferences provide good guidance for the national standardization of geographical names in each Member State. They have been compiled in a compendium and in a searchable online

database in six and five languages, respectively. However, there should be more awareness of the resolutions as a reference for the national standardization of geographical names.

- A growing number of Member States have established geographical names authorities to facilitate organized management of geographical names, which is expected to be extended to more Member States.

### Modalities and organizational structure

- Following the decision of ECOSOC in 2017 to create a combined body of the former UNCISG and UNGEGN with the name UNGEGN, its first biennial session was convened in 2019 over a period of five days. The new UNGEGN is searching for a more organized operation as an inter-governmental body representing Member States of which experts play a crucial role.
- Each of the Working Groups (currently nine in operation, three disbanded), one Task Team

and one Coordinator has been carrying out or completed its specific goals as missioned by UNGEGN. Twenty-four geographical/linguistic Divisions have functioned as groups of Member States to support regional or language-based grass-roots interaction on geographical names standardization. The whole organizational structure of UNGEGN including the Bureau, Working Groups, Task Teams and Divisions needs to be reviewed and, if required, adjusted in the new modalities, with specific focus on the functional operation, linkage and cooperation within and between these components.

**Some further needs:** More precise monitoring and evaluating UNGEGN's work programme is needed in order to increase its efficiency. More elaborated relevance of UNGEGN to achieve the 2030 SDGs should be addressed in its work programmes. Ongoing encouragement and enabling is needed for all Member States to have national geographical names standardization policies and legislation.

### Action items, actors, output and time frame

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
3-i-1	Encourage Member States to participate in UNGEGN sessions and activities; Secure funds to support participation of those who need assistance (see also Strategy 5).	Bureau, WG P&F, Secretariat.	Assess annually.
3-ii-2	Review the current versions of UNGEGN publications, establish a plan to revise or add to them, and implement it.	Bureau, WG P&F, WG RS, WG GNDM, WG TT, WG CN.	Review and plan in 2021; if needed, draft, edit and publish by 2023.
3-ii-3	Take measures to encourage and promote the publication and revision of the Toponymic Guidelines.	Coordinator TG, WG TC.	Assess annually. Take note in training courses.
3-ii-4	Codify the resolutions and recommendations into a coherent and hierarchical whole.	Bureau, WG E&I.	Review and plan in 2021; prior work done by 2023; subsequent work after 2023, if needed.
3-ii-5	Encourage experts to refer to the resolutions and recommendations in their work and particularly in preparing working papers.	Bureau, WG E&I, Secretariat.	Report to every session; announce in the documentation.
3-ii-6	Continue to maintain and update the compendium and database of the resolutions and recommendations.	WG E&I, Secretariat.	Redesign the compendium and database in 2021; update following every session.

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
3-iii-7	Review the function and operation of Bureau, Working Groups and Divisions and consider any change in the organizational structure of UNGEGN.	Bureau, WG convenors, Division chairs.	Initiate in 2021; rounds of discussions and feedbacks by 2023; and then an adjustment made by 2025, if needed.
3-iii-8	Review the documentation guidelines and submission schedule for national/divisional reports and, if needed, elaborate them.	Bureau, WG E&I, Secretariat.	Assess for every session.
3-iii-9	Encourage WG convenors and Division chairs to share and develop ideas of linking and cooperating with each other.	Bureau, all WGs, Division chairs.	Ongoing up to 2029.
3-iii-10	Monitor and evaluate UNGEGN's work programme regularly including the operation of sessions.	Bureau, WG E&I, WG P&F.	Assess annually; organize Bureau and WG meetings in 2022, 2024, 2026.
3-iii-11	Elaborate relevant aspects of UNGEGN to the goals and targets of sustainable development and find ways to develop them in its work programmes.	Bureau, all WGs.	Assess annually; plan a report on implementing SDGs in UNGEGN by 2023, progress reports in 2025, 2027, 2029.
3-iv-12	Elaborate measures to increase the number of Member States that have functioning authorities for geographical names standardization.	Bureau, WG E&I, WG TC, WG GNCH.	Ongoing; encourage organizing discussion forums.





## 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 good geographical naming practices that acknowledge people's place in the world;
- iii. Recognize that geographical names are a source of identity, encourage recognition of heritage and equality, and support indigenous, regional and/or minority groups' language revitalization and preservation; and
- iv. Contribute to building technical capabilities, such as developing guidelines, legislation, communication tools and databases to enhance culture, heritage and language recognition.

### Current status and assessment

UNEGN has encouraged the development of principles and practices to support the less tangible social concepts of geographical naming. These include connection to place through traditional, ancestral, historical, cultural, and language associations. Recognizing the importance of these human needs acknowledges a sense of place and why geographical names matter. Beyond the practical need for communicating location identification, geographical names preserve identity and belonging.

### Recommendations, initiatives, programmes and training

- As more emphasis was given to geographical names as cultural heritage, a number of UNCISG Conference resolutions on this subject were passed, for example, VIII/9, IX/4 and X/3. Several resolutions have promoted collection and recognition of indigenous and minority toponyms (for example, II/26, V/22, VIII/1, IX/5, VII/9, IX/10); and UNGEGN Recommendation

5 (2019), follows up I/16 and I/20 in addressing geographical names from unwritten languages.

- Following the 8th Conference in 2002 a Working Group was established to promote the recording and use of Indigenous, Minority Group and Regional Language geographical names; in 2012 it took on a simpler name with the wider scope of 'cultural heritage'.
- 'Geographical names and cultural heritage' is a regular agenda topic at UNGEGN sessions and was the theme of the UNGEGN Information Bulletin, No. 48, May 2015.
- Symposia organized by UNGEGN, Divisions or Working Groups have included: 'Toponyms in multilingual areas', Netherlands (2005); and geographical names as cultural heritage, Vienna (2008), Seoul (2014), Florence (2015). A workshop on implementing resolutions on commemorative names was held during the 29th UNGEGN session in Bangkok (2016).
- Special presentations on intangible cultural heritage have been made by UNESCO at

Conferences in 2007 and 2012 and some Member States have worked towards possible UNESCO recognition of particular groups of geographical names.

- At both Conferences and Sessions individual Member States have presented documents reflecting their progress in various areas of cultural heritage, identity, multilingualism, indigenous naming, etc. and these are available on the UNGEGN website.
- UNGEGN acknowledges UNDRIP, and has also reached out to indigenous organizations, such as UNPFII and ICIPN to participate at UNGEGN sessions.
- The UNGEGN toponymy training manual, the on-site and online training courses, the basic manual and the Media kit include sections and presentations on geographical names as cultural heritage.

### Achievements

- From its initial technical roots, UNGEGN has over the years increasingly placed significance on the cultural value of geographical names, and this topic has been included in UNGEGN's toponymic training programmes.
- Many UNGEGN participant Member States have made and continue to make remarkable progress on their domestic work on declaring, promoting and celebrating the unique connections between culture, heritage, language and geographical names.
- UNGEGN has recognized the requirement for support to, for example, unwritten languages, which are necessarily from regional and/or minority language communities.
- UNGEGN has also recognized the need to understand exonym use and the Working Group on Exonyms is active in examining this topic. There are many available publications including an ongoing book series, Name & Place, comprising the Working Group's papers.
- Participation and leadership of UNGEGN experts in academic conferences of scientific bodies considering cultural heritage, e.g. International

Congress of Onomastic Sciences, so promoting the work of UNGEGN.

- There has been some provision of advice to organizations (UN and non-UN) on the benefits of recognizing the intangible cultural heritage through geographical names.

**Some further needs:** Some Member States have significant work to do in declaring, promoting, celebrating and recognizing the importance of the unique connections between culture, heritage, language and geographical names. Relationships with external bodies could be further developed to strengthen and enhance the connection that geographical names have with culture and heritage, e.g. UNESCO, UNPFII. UNGEGN could facilitate Member States' progress in this field by sharing 'model' or 'example' case studies from other members, on particular issues. Greater support could be offered to develop writing systems for unwritten languages, thereby providing a means of representing geographical names in a standard way and allowing these to receive a wider audience. A financial impact may be relevant as the benefits of recognizing culture and heritage do not necessarily have an obvious tangible advantage, and therefore may be overlooked or side-lined by some Member States.

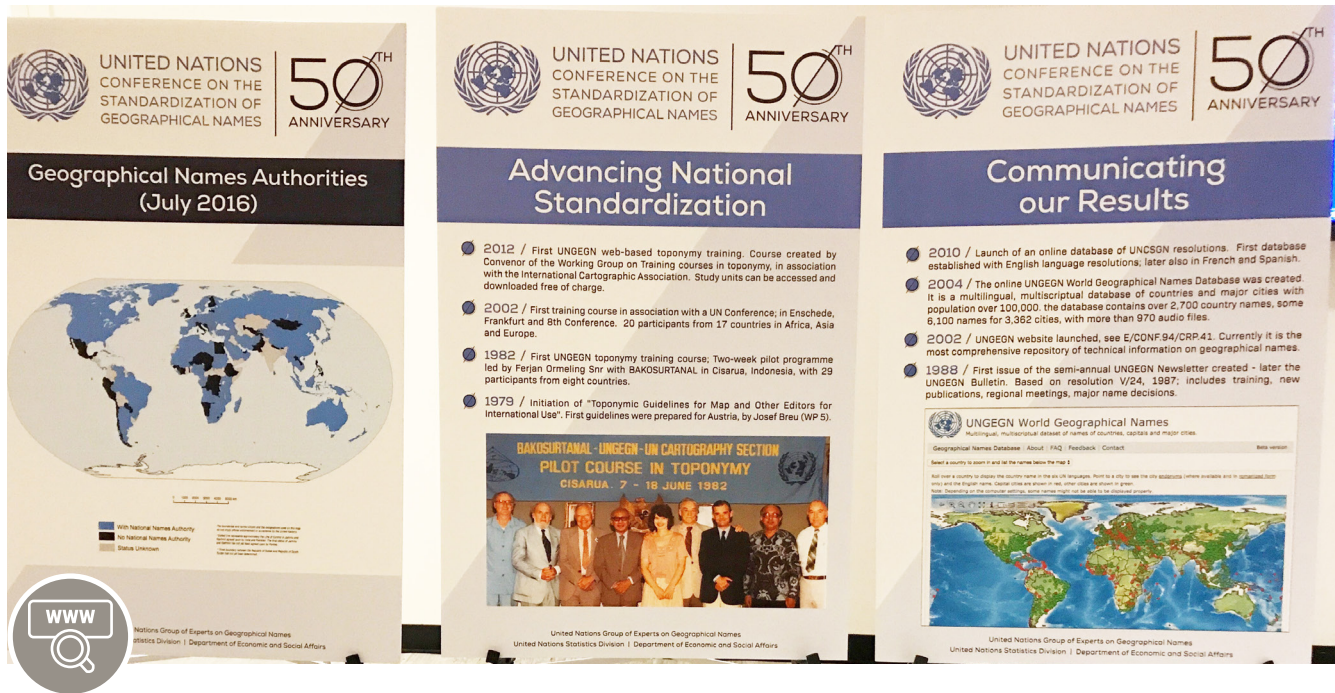
### Action items, actors, output and time frame

As the scope of cultural heritage is wide there will be several formalized, structured and active Focus Groups within the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage:

1. Geographical names in relation to minorities and indigenous people.
2. Legislation, policies & best practices relating to geographical names.
3. Commercial and commemorative naming, including urban naming.
4. Crowd sourcing for collecting stories behind the names.
5. The names of unwritten languages.
6. Naming within tourism and branding.

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
4-i-1	Liaise with UNPFII and its members to better appreciate geographical names as part of indigenous cultural heritage and language retention.	Bureau, WG GNCH, Member States.	Liaison with UNPFII: initiated by 2023 and continuing.
4-i-2	Provide supportive evidence (e.g. pamphlet) as to the significance of geographical names on culture, identity and language.	WG GNCH (Focus Group 2), WG P&F.	Pamphlet or other: concept and draft text by 2023; document (likely in English) for 2025; other languages 2025-2029.
4-i-3	Investigate the need for cooperation to advise on and share experiences on methods for crowd sourcing relating to urban naming and street naming processes, and the relationship with relevant SDGs (e.g. sustainable cities).	Bureau, WG GNCH (Focus Groups 3 & 4).	Urban naming: plan for 2023 and ongoing implementation.  Crowd sourcing: 2025 and beyond – encourage papers/discussion at UNGEGN sessions.
4-i-4	Share experience on cooperation with emergency services, tourism operators, brand consultants and other providers of services useful to society, e.g. plurilingual societies.	WG GNCH (Focus Groups 1 & 6).	Emergency services, tourism operators, brand consultants: initial examples for 2023; wider scope for 2025 and beyond.
4-ii-5	Share Member States' treatment of geographical names in indigenous, minority and regional language groups (policies and principles, field collection methodology, naming of both cultural and physical features, etc.).	WG GNCH (Focus Group 1), Member States.	Indigenous, minority and regional language group naming: ongoing, with specified goals and milestones proposed by 2023.
4-ii-6	Share effective practices and applications on culturally-oriented resolutions, such as commemorative naming and commercialization of naming.	WG E&I, WG GNCH (Focus Group 2).	Re resolutions: plan of selected topics for 2023; discussion groups as side events during UNGEGN sessions.
4-ii-7	Encourage presentations and discussions relevant to current key cultural aspects of naming and renaming, and to naming in particular environments.	WG GNCH, Member States.	Naming and renaming: encourage papers/discussion at each UNGEGN session.  Physical environments: encourage papers/discussion at UNGEGN sessions.
4-ii-8	Investigate recognition of geographical names by UNESCO as part of intangible cultural heritage.	Bureau, WG GNCH, Member States.	UNESCO: report of findings by 2025.

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
4-ii-9	Cooperate with academia, so that geographical name datasets collected (by academics, for example, historical or linguistic variants) are geo-referenced and linked to standardized datasets.	WG GNCH, WG GNDM.	Academic datasets: 2025 and ongoing.
4-iii-10	The Working Group on Exonyms to continue the examination of and publications on, the treatment, use and reduction of exonyms in the context of geographical names standardization and effective UN communication.	WG E.	Exonyms: ongoing reporting.
4-iv-11	Contribute to the rationale for creation of national authorities with legal rights/obligations to standardize geographical names.	WG GNCH (Focus Group 2), WG P&F.	Creation of national authorities: ongoing, with specified goals and milestones proposed by 2023.
4-iv-12	Investigate principles and methodology for recording and writing geographical names from unwritten languages.	WG GNCH (Focus Group 5), WG RS.	Unwritten languages: outline of challenges, benefits and possible goals for 2023; sample study for 2025; wider application for 2029.



## Strategy 5: Promotion and capacity building

- i. Raise awareness of the importance of using standardized geographical names and their role as a crucial element of geospatial information;
- ii. Enhance the visibility of UNGEGN through its publications, improved communications, outreach, networking and partnerships;
- iii. Assist Member States in their capacity building and 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.

### Current status and assessment

- Up-to-date UNGEGN website, established in 2002, has been maintained and been through several reiterations to address design and content, including: 1) The UNGEGN World Geographical Names Database (2004), 2) A searchable database of all resolutions and downloadable documents in four UN languages and two non-UN languages, 3) Information on UNGEGN's Divisions, Working Groups and Task Teams, 4) Reports from all the meetings under the auspices of UNGEGN, including working papers, conference room papers, special presentations and additional documents, 5) Publicity material, including manuals related to geographical names, brochures and media kit to publicize the work and goals of UNGEGN, and 6) Information on toponymic laws and regulations regarding Member States.
- Biannual UNGEGN Bulletin issues, since 2013 with thematic issues. Established as the de-facto media to report on developments and upcoming events in matters related to UNGEGN or within the scope of geographical names.
- Wikipedia presence in multiple languages.
- Twitter presence.
- Enabling participation at UNGEGN events for members from developing countries through funding from a variety of sources to enable the participation in Conferences/Sessions.
- Funds from UN Statistics have supported training courses in various parts of the world.
- Press releases written and processed before and after Conferences and Sessions.
- Presentations made by UNGEGN experts at academic and scientific conferences promoting the work of UNGEGN.
- UNGEGN has assisted in capacity building by providing on-site training since 1982, essentially in response to Divisional needs, and has produced training modules available free through the website to all interested individuals in association with ICA.

**Some further needs:** Generally, the work of UNGEGN and importance of geographical names standardization is still poorly understood and appreciated in many Member States and outside organizations.

- Direct UNGEGN web presence maintains a good standard, although a number of sub-pages are in need of improvement.
- UNGEGN World Geographical Names Database page has not been updated with the recent upgrade. In need of reinvention.
- Member States contributions to web presence must be developed to ensure up-to-date information. Without requests/persuasion few UNGEGN experts provide updated information, such as national names authority data, contact information, city names for the UNGEGN database, etc.
- Although many UNGEGN publications continue to be relevant 10-20 years later, content needs to be reviewed for updating.
- Better arrangements need to be in place for the UNGEGN Secretariat to be able to update and provide visual and map representation, such information as Member States with national names authorities, Member States with

toponymic guidelines, which Member States have supplied data to the UNGEGN database, where training courses have been held, etc.

- Bulletin standard is high with relevant topics for information, capacity building, and toponymic issues. However, editorial proof-reading capacity in all UNGEGN languages must be ensured. To ensure relevance and actuality, a list of topics must be maintained and regularly updated. The development of templates for contribution could be beneficial.
- Wiki-presence is good, regularly updated, although a more active editorial presence is necessary, as the current situation is under-robust.
- Social-media presence adequate, although a more active editorial presence is necessary, as the current situation is under-robust. There is also room to improve on social media communication in intervals between meetings.
- Mechanisms for providing funding for participants from developing countries in place. However, the funding situation is not robust therefore, an UNGEGN trust fund needs to be established.

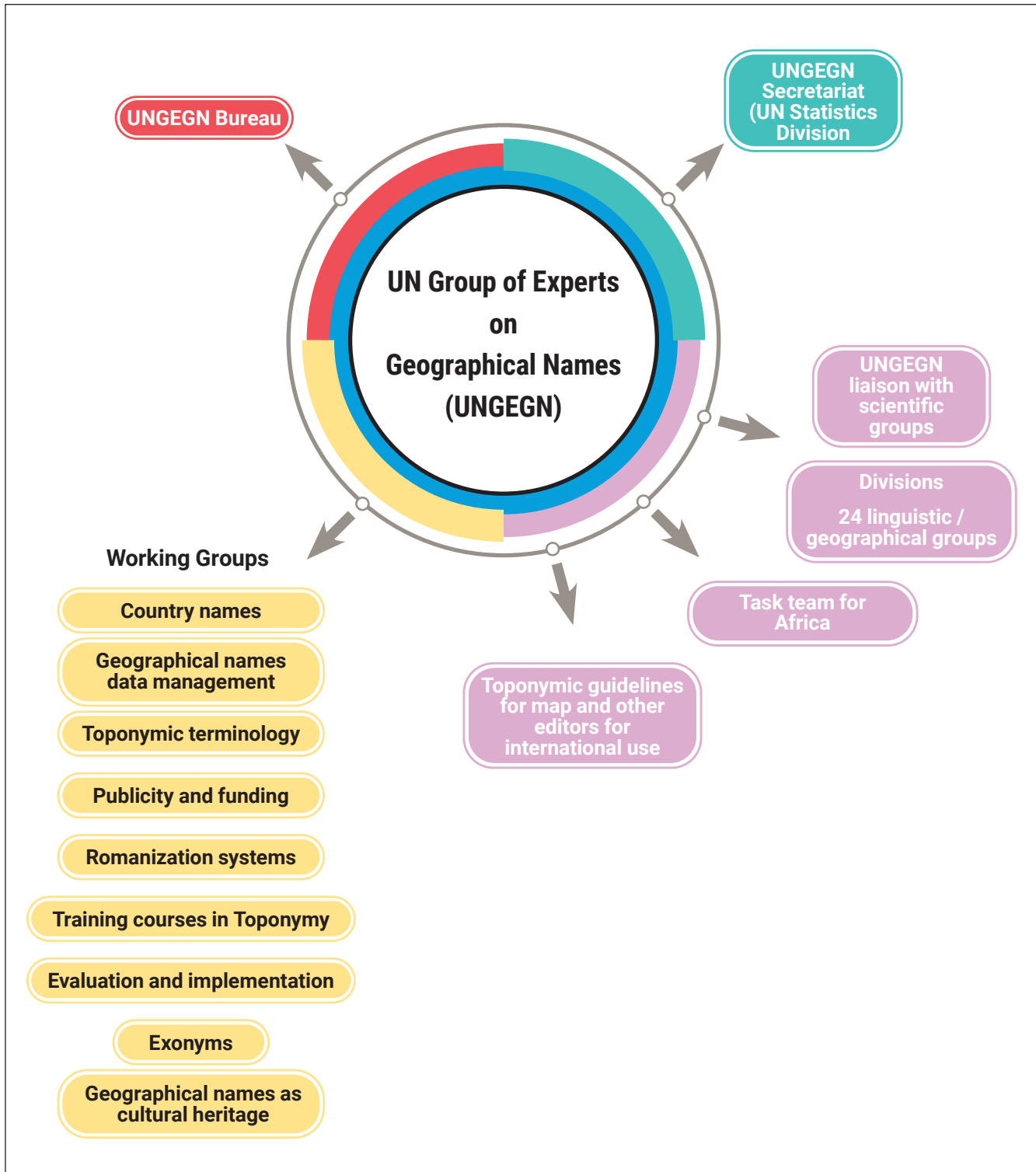
### Action items, actors, output and time frame

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
5-i-1	Develop plans for awareness raising and increase promotion of UNGEGN geographical names standardization.	Task Team for Africa (WG A), UNGEGN Chair, WG P&F.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement model for regular production and circulation of information sheet pertinent to standardization issues in Africa (2021).</li> <li>2. Implement cooperation with UN- GGIM and its sub-units to promote the value of standardized geographical names and processes involved to achieve this (2022).</li> <li>3. Implement procedures for ensuring strong involvement of users of geographical names as speakers and observers at UNGEGN sessions (2023).</li> </ol>
5-i-2	Monitor and evaluate promotion and capacity building.	WG P&F.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure relevant and updated capacity building material is available at UNGEGN website (2022).</li> <li>2. Implement review procedure for updating capacity-building material (2023).</li> </ol>

No.	Action items	Actors/ responsibility	Output and time frame
5-ii-3	UNGEGN Website development and maintenance.	WG P&F.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Re-develop UNGEGN World Geographical Names webpage (end of 2021).</li> <li>2. Develop plan for stricter monitoring of UNGEGN website with higher member nation involvement to ensure content maintains up-to-date, including review procedures for updating and creation of content and better visual representation of achievements (e.g. Member States with names authorities, toponymic guidelines, etc.).</li> <li>3. Update UNGEGN website content and link the UNGEGN webpage with the related toponymic webpages from the Member States (2022).</li> <li>4. Implement system for ensuring up-to-date information on UNGEGN website (2022) Implement website modernizations at 6 years intervals (2025).</li> </ol>
5-ii-4	Ensuring relevance, development and dissemination of UNGEGN Bulletin.	WG P&F.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement yearly evaluations of future topics and ensure focus on the topics investigated in issues (2021) Expand distribution of UNGEGN Bulletin (2021-2029).</li> </ol>
5-iii-5	Ensuring international Toponymy training courses for the future.	WG TC.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish and maintain a complete group of trainers for international Toponymy Training Courses (2021).</li> <li>2. Ensure as complete competences as possible in Toponymy Training (2022).</li> <li>3. Implement procedures for regular review, update and content creation relating to toponymic training materials (2024). Implement online courses and workshops on specific topics for training relevant to national geographical names standardization (2024).</li> </ol>
5-iii-6	Establish social-media group to increase level of activity on Twitter.	WG P&F.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement robust model for and organization of social media presence (2023).</li> </ol>
5-iv-7	Explore possibility of UNGEGN trust fund for capacity building and enabling participation.	WG P&F.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify areas of UNGEGN in need of funding (2021).</li> <li>2. Establish legal framework of UNGEGN trust fund, purpose and range of activities (2023).</li> <li>3. Begin attracting funding to UNGEGN trust fund, if previous point suggests viability (2024) Launch UNGEGN Trust Fund (2027, or earlier).</li> </ol>

# Implementation Framework

## Organization Chart





## Membership, Bureau, Working Groups, Task Teams, Divisions

The Group of Experts is composed of representatives of States Members of the United Nations, including experts appointed by Governments. In appointing their representatives, Member States designate experts with specific knowledge drawn from the interrelated fields of geography, cartography, geospatial information, linguistics and history.

Divisions of the Group of Experts comprise the major linguistic and geographical divisions of the world, as listed in the Appendix. Member States decide for themselves the Division(s) to which they wish to belong; some belong to more than one Division. Each Division is expected to stimulate activities in the standardization of geographical names within the Division, through technical meetings, exchange of experiences, correspondence, etc. Currently, there are 24 Divisions that guide the work of UNGEGN during and between its sessions.

Working Groups are created to follow up topics and issues which cut across the divisional structure of UNGEGN. Currently, nine Working Groups are in operation. In addition, UNGEGN has a Task Team for Africa and a Coordinator for the Toponymic Guidelines. The current work plans of these Working Groups, Task Team and Coordinator are listed in the Strategic Plan. A working group is disbanded when it has fulfilled its purposes.

The Bureau is composed of one chair, two vice-chairs and two rapporteurs. The Bureau, Working Group convenors, coordinators and former chairs meet regularly through video conferencing or face-to-face meetings.

Secretariat support for UNGEGN is provided by the UN Statistics Division.

## Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

The UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029 provides a general framework of

UNGEKN's activities to support the standardization of geographical names in each Member State. In order to achieve the vision and aims, the UNGEGN Bureau, Working Groups and Divisions will deliver and pursue the respective action plans as specified in each strategy. UNGEGN sessions held biennially will be an effective forum to report on the progress of the activities that each component of UNGEGN has achieved during the intersessional period, and to evaluate and make updates and amendments to the Plan, as appropriate. The UNGEGN structure including the Working Groups and Divisions will be assessed based on the efficiency of implementing action plans and, if needed, proposed to be reorganized. Each Member State is invited to report on its activities to implement the Plan in the UNGEGN sessions.

## Financing

An important element in achieving the goals set out in this Strategic Plan lies in developing funding strategies to enable UNGEGN to assist Member States in achieving national geographical names standardization. A funding strategy is outlined under item 5-iv. Explore possibility of UNGEGN trust fund for capacity building and enabling participation. The outline sets the course for an establishment of a legal framework of an UNGEGN Trust Fund becoming a part of the umbrella UNSD Trust Fund, with transparency, efficient management, good governance, a time frame for funding attraction, and eventual launch.

Key to this work is the implementation of a Terms of Reference to provide a mandate for the establishment and purpose of the trust fund, including possible sources of funding, and which UNGEGN activities are to be supported from the fund. Approval of the UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029 should secure the necessary mandate for creating an UNGEGN Trust Fund and paves the way forward to identifying donors in order to secure the necessary funds for a sustainable UNGEGN of the future.

# Appendix

## Linguistic or geographical Divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

---

1. Africa Central Division
2. Africa East Division
3. Africa South Division
4. Africa West Division
5. Arabic Division
6. Asia East Division (other than China)
7. Asia South-East Division
8. Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)
9. Baltic Division
10. Celtic Division
11. China Division
12. Dutch- and German-speaking Division
13. East Central and South-East Europe Division
14. Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division
15. East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic)
16. French-speaking Division
17. India Division
18. Latin America Division
19. Norden Division
20. Pacific South-West Division
21. Portuguese-speaking Division
22. Romano-Hellenic Division
23. United Kingdom Division
24. United States of America/Canada Division

More information on Divisions and their website URLs is available on the following UNGEGN webpage:

# Abbreviations

## UNGEKN and its Working Groups

Abbreviation	Full name and URL
UNCSGN	<b>United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names</b>
UNGEKN	<b>United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/</a>
WG CN	<b>Working Group on Country Names</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg1.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg1.cshtml</a>
WG E	<b>Working Group on Exonyms</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg8.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg8.cshtml</a> <a href="http://ungekn.zrc-sazu.si/Home.aspx">http://ungekn.zrc-sazu.si/Home.aspx</a>
WG E&I	<b>Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg7.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg7.cshtml</a> <a href="http://www.ngii.go.kr/portal/ungn/mainEn.do">http://www.ngii.go.kr/portal/ungn/mainEn.do</a> (UNCSGN resolutions database)
WG GNCH	<b>Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg9.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg9.cshtml</a>
WG GNDM	<b>Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg2.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg2.cshtml</a> <a href="https://wiki.gdi-de.org/display/wgtdfg">https://wiki.gdi-de.org/display/wgtdfg</a> Working+Group+on+Toponymic+Data+Files+and+Gazettee rs+of+UNGEKN
WG P&F	<b>Working Group on Publicity and Funding</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg4.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungekn/working_groups/wg4.cshtml</a>

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full name and URL</b>
WG RS	<b>Working Group on Romanization Systems</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wg5.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wg5.cshtml</a> <a href="http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/">http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/</a>
WG TC	<b>Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wg6.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wg6.cshtml</a> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/_data_ICAcourses/index.htm">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/_data_ICAcourses/index.htm</a>   (webcourse on toponymy)
WG TT	<b>Working Group on Toponymic Terminology</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wg3.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wg3.cshtml</a> <a href="http://ortsnamen.at/en/ungegn_glossary/">http://ortsnamen.at/en/ungegn_glossary/</a> (toponymic terminology database)
TT Africa	<b>Task Team for Africa</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wgAfrica.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wgAfrica.cshtml</a>
Coordinator TG	<b>Coordinator for the Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors for International Use</b> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wgGuidelines.cshtml">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wgGuidelines.cshtml</a> <a href="https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/nna/toponymic/">https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/nna/toponymic/</a> (links to TGs of MSs)

## United Nations and its bodies other than UNGEGN

CARIGEO	<b>Caribbean Geospatial Initiative of UN-GGIM America</b> <a href="http://www.un-ggim-america.org/en/assets/modulos/proyectos.html?proyecto=5">http://www.un-ggim-america.org/en/assets/modulos/proyectos.html?proyecto=5</a>
ECOSOC	<b>United Nations Economic and Social Council</b> <a href="https://www.un.org/ecosoc/">https://www.un.org/ecosoc/</a>
HLPF	<b>United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development</b> <a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf</a>
IDIL	<b>International Decade of Indigenous Languages (led by UNESCO)</b> <a href="https://en.unesco.org/news/upcoming-decade-indigenous-languages-2022-2032-focus-indigenous-language-users-human-rights">https://en.unesco.org/news/upcoming-decade-indigenous-languages-2022-2032-focus-indigenous-language-users-human-rights</a>
OCHA	<b>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</b> <a href="https://www.unocha.org/about-ocha">https://www.unocha.org/about-ocha</a>
SALB	<b>Second Administrative Level Boundaries</b> <a href="https://www.unsalb.org/">https://www.unsalb.org/</a>
UN	<b>United Nations</b> <a href="https://www.un.org/">https://www.un.org/</a>
UNDRIP	<b>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</b> <a href="https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/">https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/</a>

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full name and URL</b>
UNECA	<b>United Nations Economic Commission for Africa</b> <a href="https://www.uneca.org/">https://www.uneca.org/</a>
UNEP	<b>United Nations Environment Programme</b> <a href="https://www.unep.org/">https://www.unep.org/</a>
UNESCO	<b>United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization</b> <a href="https://en.unesco.org/">https://en.unesco.org/</a>
UN-GGIM	<b>United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management</b> <a href="http://ggim.un.org/">http://ggim.un.org/</a>
UNPFII	<b>United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</b> <a href="https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2.html">https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2.html</a>
WHO	<b>World Health Organization</b> <a href="https://www.who.int/">https://www.who.int/</a>

**UN Geospatial (formerly Cartography)**

**UN-Habitat**

**UN Map Library**

## **International organizations, commissions, and academic groups**

AOCRS / AOCT	<b>African Organization of Cartography and Remote Sensing / Organisation africaine de cartographie et de télédétection</b> <a href="https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100004655">https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100004655</a>
FIG	<b>International Federation of Surveyors</b> <a href="https://www.fig.net/">https://www.fig.net/</a>
GEBCO	<b>General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans</b> <a href="https://www.gebco.net/">https://www.gebco.net/</a>
ICA	<b>International Cartographic Association</b> <a href="https://icaci.org/">https://icaci.org/</a>
ICANN	<b>Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers</b> <a href="https://www.icann.org/">https://www.icann.org/</a>
ICIPN	<b>International Council on Indigenous Place Names</b> <a href="http://ourlanguages.org.au/exploring-ways-to-reclaim-cultural-identity-through-place-names/">http://ourlanguages.org.au/exploring-ways-to-reclaim-cultural-identity-through-place-names/</a> (Conference in 2010)
ICOS	<b>International Council of Onomastic Sciences</b> <a href="https://icosweb.net/">https://icosweb.net/</a>

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full name and URL</b>
IGU	<b>International Geographical Union</b> <a href="https://igu-online.org/">https://igu-online.org/</a>
IHO	<b>International Hydrographic Organization</b> <a href="https://iho.int/">https://iho.int/</a>
IMO	<b>International Maritime Organization</b> <a href="https://www.imo.org/">https://www.imo.org/</a>
INSPIRE	<b>Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe</b> <a href="https://inspire.ec.europa.eu/">https://inspire.ec.europa.eu/</a>
ISO	<b>International Organization for Standardization</b> <a href="https://www.iso.org/">https://www.iso.org/</a>
OGC	<b>Open Geospatial Consortium</b> <a href="https://www.ogc.org/">https://www.ogc.org/</a>
PAIGH	<b>Pan American Institute of Geography and History</b> <a href="https://ipgh.org/">https://ipgh.org/</a>
RCMRD	<b>Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (Nairobi)</b> <a href="https://rcmrd.org/">https://rcmrd.org/</a>
SCAGI	<b>Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information</b> <a href="https://www.scar.org/resources/scagi/overview/">https://www.scar.org/resources/scagi/overview/</a>
SCAR	<b>Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research</b> <a href="https://www.scar.org/">https://www.scar.org/</a>
SCUFN	<b>GEBCO Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names</b> <a href="https://iho.int/en/scufn">https://iho.int/en/scufn</a>

#### Unicode consortium

### Related terminologies

GIS	<b>geographic information system</b>
SDI	<b>spatial data infrastructure</b>
SDGs	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b> <a href="https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/">https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/</a>
UNTERM	<b>United Nations Terminology Database (multilingual)</b> <a href="https://unterm.un.org/unterm/portal/welcome">https://unterm.un.org/unterm/portal/welcome</a>





**United Nations  
Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**