

Inaugural Meeting of UNGEGN Bureau and Division Chairs

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Friday 19 November 2021

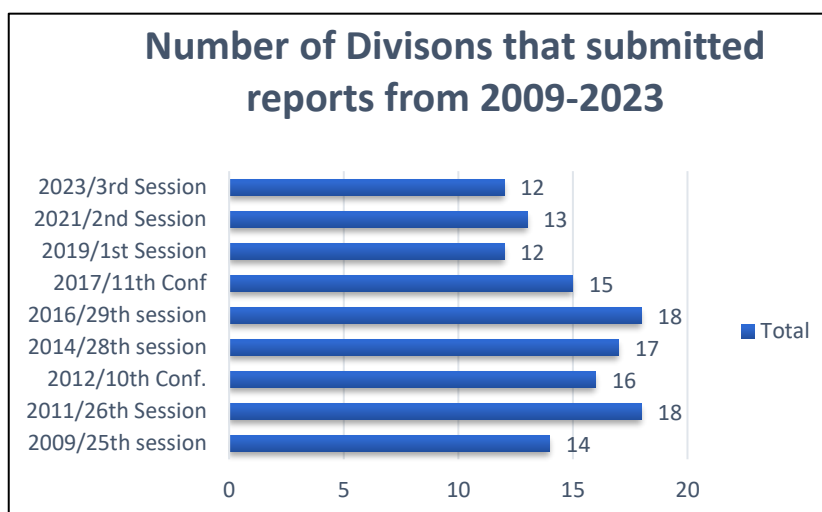
7:00 am

CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

Background

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), an expert body of ECOSOC is responsible for encouraging the standardization of geographical names and promoting the national and international benefits to be derived from standardization. Over its 50 plus years of existence, the Group of Experts has created a unique structure, consisting of the Bureau, 24 Divisions, nine Working Groups, two Task Teams and nine Liaison representatives to accomplish its mandate and work. The [UNGEGN Rules of Procedure](#) details ten objectives, and of particular note to this meeting is objective four/(d), which is: *“to coordinate the activities of linguistic or geographical divisions formed to further the work at the national level, to encourage the active participation of countries and divisions and to promote a degree of uniformity in the work undertaken.”* The existence of and work done by UNGEGN’s twenty-four linguistic and geographical divisions are fundamental to the successful operations of the Group of Experts and to the implementation of resolutions and recommendations which emanate from past conferences and current sessions.

2. Following the restructuring and creation of the “new UNGEGN” in 2017 and the adoption of its Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029 it was recognized that increased focus and support of the activities of Divisions was needed. Further, at the May 2021 session of UNGEGN, the secretariat in its report GEGN.2/2021/5/CRP.5 called upon States Members representatives to resuscitate inactive divisions, and if needed to seek the guidance and assistance of the UNGEGN Bureau to support their activities. The need to make this call was based on the findings from a review of the secretariat’s records on linguistic and geographical divisions participation and submission of reports to conferences and sessions, functioning bureaus, and operational websites. The following chart shows the total number of Divisional reports submitted from the 25th session to the 2021 session.



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Divisional History

3. The report ([E/CONF.53/3](#)) of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN 1967) page 7 stated that “The Permanent Committee should include representatives of each of the major world linguistic/geographic groups.” The first 14 groups were suggested. At the second UNCSGN held in London in 1972, the Conference under resolution II/4 recommended the titles of 14 linguistic/geographical divisions. It should be noted that at the 1972 conference the importance of developing good working communications system among the experts themselves, the names authorities within the division and other organizations working in the field of names standardization was emphasized. In addition, the second conference, resolution 19 on Regional meetings, recommended that divisions prepare and forward to the United Nations a proposed programme of meetings within the division. This was based on the successes of meetings held by a number of divisions.
4. The appendix further details resolutions III/5 and IV/25 which support and justify the creation, operations and benefits of linguistic and geographic divisions.
5. The resolutions outlined above not only provide a historical reference of the evolution of Linguistic/Geographical Divisions, they also provide the framework within which Divisions may operate, cooperate, and relate with their Member States and the UNGEGN Secretariat.
6. In addition, the UNGEGN Rules of Procedure ([E/2018/L.25](#)) July 2018, section XIV, Rule 47 lays out eight overarching guidelines governing the composition and operations of linguistic and geographical divisions. Linguistic/geographical divisions were created to support the work of Group of Experts and serve as the bridge to Member States. The UNGEGN divisions are entrenched, and codified structures buttressed by binding instruments such as the Rules of Procedure and resolutions dating back some 50 years.

Objective of the Meeting

7. This meeting is therefore the first of planned future initiatives with the objective of engaging divisional leadership, to listen and learn of their geographical names standardizations concerns and requirements. In addition, the meeting will seek to begin the process of identifying strategies, priorities and actions relevant to addressing specific divisional organizational and operational issues, revitalization of inactive divisions and strengthening their involvement and contribution to implementing the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029.

Participants

8. The targeted participants will be:
 - i. the core UNGEGN Bureau members – Chair, two vice chairs and two rapporteurs, and
 - ii. the chairs of the 24 UNGEGN linguistic and geographical divisions. The Chairs may be accompanied by their vice chairs or secretaries.

Periodicity and Format of Meetings

9. The planned intention is to convene Divisional meetings twice per year, to be discussed and decided. The meeting will be conducted in English and via Microsoft Teams virtual platform.



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from 7:00 -9:00 am NYC time

Draft Agenda

1. Welcome and opening remarks
 - i. Chair UNGEGN– Pierre Jaillard
 - ii. Director of UNSD-Stefan Schweinfest
2. The Importance of Divisions in the UNGEGN framework– Pierre Jaillard
3. Examples of operations and activities of Divisions
 - i. Asia South East, Mohamad Arief Syafii, Indonesia
 - ii. Norden, Ingvil Nordland, Norway
 - iii. Romano-Hellenic, Andrea Cantile, Italy
4. Open discussion
 - i. Introductory statement -Pierre Jaillard
 - ii. Guidance required to assist Divisions
5. Next steps and closing remarks



APPENDIX

A. Linguistic/Geographical Divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names as of May 2017 and dates created.

Alphabetic list by name, as currently used

Africa Central	1978	(from 1972 part of Africa south of the Sahara)
Africa East	1978	(from 1972 part of Africa south of the Sahara)
Africa South	1992	(from 1972-1978, part of Africa south of the Sahara)
Africa West	1978	(from 1972 part of Africa south of the Sahara)
Arabic	1972	
Asia East (other than China)	1972	(originally Asia, east)
Asia South-East	1972	(originally Asia, south-east; then Asia South-East and Pacific South-West)
Asia South-West (other than Arabic)	1972	
Baltic	1992	
Celtic	1987	
China	1975	
Dutch- and German-speaking	1972	
East Central and South-East Europe	1972	
Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia	1992	(from 1972, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Division existed)
East Mediterranean (other than Arabic)	1987	
French-speaking	1998	
India	1972	
Latin America	1972	
Norden	1972	
Pacific South-West	2012	(originally Asia, south-east; then Asia South-East and Pacific South-West)
Portuguese-speaking	2007	
Romano-Hellenic	1972	(originally Romance languages, other than Latin America)
United Kingdom	1972	
United States of America / Canada	1972	

Taken from [E/CONF.105/49/CRP.49](#), 11th UNCSGN, August 2017, prepared by Helen Kerfoot, Canada, former Chair

B. Resolutions on the creation and operation of Divisions

The 3rd conference, 1977, Resolution 5 - Divisional activities and meetings ([E/CONF.69/4](#))

Recommended that divisions continue and expand activities and forward to the UN Secretariat reports of meetings as they are held, of agreements as they are reached and of co-operative programmes as they are initiated. This resolution was based on satisfactory reports of the growing productiveness of divisional and interdivisional meetings and co-operative programmes.

The 4th Conference, 1982, Resolution 24 – Divisional activities ([E/CONF.74/3](#))

Considered that geographical/linguistic divisions are a fundamental element in the structure of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Also considered that the Divisions are particularly well qualified to recognize problems of standardization of geographical names common to their geographical/linguistic areas. Recognized the necessity of extending the exchange of experience and information among different divisions.



Recommended that UNGEGN continue to encourage divisions to be more active in implementing the decisions of the UNCSGN as applicable, in working out reporting schedules on their activities to all States within their divisions and the UNGEGN.

Further recommended that Divisions promote the exchange of information among them and should make available to other divisions as frequently as possible the results of their work in the way deemed appropriate.



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