

7 February 2019

Original: English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names
2019 session**

New York, 29 April–3 May 2019

Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**National and international standardization of geographical
names: names collection, office treatment, national authorities,
features beyond a single sovereignty and
international cooperation****National standardization of geographical names: what has
been done so far and suggestions on how the United Nations
Group of Experts on Geographical Names could facilitate
further progress****Summary****

One of the key roles of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names since its first meeting has been to encourage and facilitate the establishment and continuity of national names authorities within States Members of the United Nations. Each country should take responsibility for the standardization of the written forms and applications of geographical names for features and places within its jurisdiction.

In the full report, the author indicates that, over the course of the 11 United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, many papers have been presented detailing the work and responsibilities of geographical names authorities and their associated offices. A number of resolutions adopted at the Conferences directly address national standardization, a continuing core area of importance for the Group of Experts. Furthermore, the author points to a number of measures that have been taken by the Group of Experts to encourage and assist the establishment of national names authorities, namely: training (on-site and online courses); developing pertinent documentation (manuals, brochures); providing information on national best practices on the website of the Group of Experts (in the information bulletin or by posting sample national materials); creating a special Task

* GEGN.2/2019/1.

** The full report was prepared by Helen Kerfoot for the Bureau of the Group of Experts. The report will be available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st_session_UNGEKN.html, in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2019/25/CRP.25.



Team for Africa; assisting individual countries through international cooperation; inviting guest speakers to the Conferences and to the sessions of the Group of Experts to promote the practical uses of toponymic standardization; and organizing discussions on standardization at academic conferences.

Indications are provided of progress made over the decades in establishing national names authorities. However, the Group of Experts clearly still has much work to do in order to achieve its goal of each Member State taking responsibility for national names standardization on a continuing basis.

As the “new” United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names looks to the future, how will it assess the obstacles to achieving the objective of geographical names standardization? Some suggestions for approaches are put forward, with a view to initiating discussion among experts (and, where appropriate, encouraging cooperation with the working groups of the Group of Experts). Topics proposed include: upgrading and expanding the existing material pertinent to national standardization on the website of the Group of Experts; identifying the principal restrictions experienced by Member States in establishing appropriate national names authorities; determining the best approaches to capacity-building to address differing situations; increasing the awareness of management to the significance of geographical names standardization; leveraging links with other scientific and academic groups to further geographical names standardization; and creating a dedicated group to provide leadership in directing and promoting this aspect of the Group of Expert’s work. Experts will be invited to provide suggestions on how the Group of Experts should try to achieve national standardization of geographical names worldwide, and, in doing so, address a significant component of its mandate in the coming years.
