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**United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names
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Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Reports: divisions of the Group of Experts**Report of the Arabic Division****Summary****

The Arabic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names is composed of Arab experts in geographical names assigned by their countries to establish, unify and process names of places and landmarks in all Arab countries. The Division is a member of the Council of Arab Economic Unity affiliated to the League of Arab States.

The Arabic Division has a General Board that includes representatives of all Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and State of Palestine. These countries are all members of the League of Arab States.

The aims of the Division are:

- To lay down basics and rules required to establish and standardize the use of Arabic geographical names at the national, regional and international levels, solving all linguistic and phonetic problems.
- To exchange scientific and technical experiences that assist all member States in finding their way towards issuing their own geographical gazetteers and a unified Arab geographical gazetteer.
- To lay down common cooperation mechanisms for Arab organizations that deal with geographical names in general and the map industry in particular, and their counterpart regional and international organizations.
- To highlight the economic, social, cultural, historical and religious benefits of gathering, setting up, preserving and unifying geographical names.

* [GEGN.2/2019/1](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/1st_session_UNGEGN.html).

** The full report was prepared by Awni Al-Khasawneh, Chair of the Arabic Division. The report will be available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/1st_session_UNGEGN.html, in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2019/30/CRP.30.



The most important achievements of the Division are:

- Participation of Arab delegations and experts in meetings and conferences of the Group of Experts since 1971.
- Establishment of national boards or committees in many Arab countries, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the State of Palestine.
- Adoption of a standardized Arabic transliteration system in 1971, which was amended in 2002, and adoption of an updated Unified Arabic Transliteration System in 2007.
- Holding of training courses on geographical names.
- Publication of a specialized semi-annual magazine on geographical names, which is the first international publication of that kind in the Arabic language.
- Establishment of a website for the Arabic Division.
- Establishment of a permanent headquarters for the Arabic Division in Jordan, with the necessary equipment and employees.
- Holding in many Arab countries of numerous workshops and scientific meetings in the field of geographical names.
- Holding of seven conferences for the Arabic Division, and two conferences on surveys and geographical names.
- Holding of many meetings of the Arabic Division.
- Representative of the Arabic Division serving as Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
- Production of the Jordanian Gazetteers and Atlas.
- Adoption of a resolution at the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names recommending the adoption of the Unified Arabic Transliteration System (Beirut 2007 system), as set out in the document entitled “Romanization system from Arabic letters to Latinized letters 2007”.

Future activities include organization of the Eighth Conference of Arab Experts on Geographical Names, to be held in Amman from 7 to 10 September 2019.
