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

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Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda *

**Cooperation and liaison with other organizations:
Economic Commission for Africa and Committee of Experts
on Global Geospatial Information Management.**

**Report of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information
Management**

Submitted by the UNGEGN Secretariat**

Summary:

The full report prepared by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management covers its activities that are relevant to the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The Group of Experts is invited to review the report and express its views on the efforts to strengthen collaboration in furthering the standardization of geographical names.

At its eighth session, held from 1 to 3 August 2018, the Committee of Experts welcomed the report of the Group of Experts ([E/C.20/2018/17](#)) and commended the efforts of the Group of Experts to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the Committee and identify items for collaborative work. The Committee of Experts also encouraged further collaboration, and in that context welcomed the proposal to create a liaison group tasked with defining operational working relations and coordinating future collaborative work.

The report provides a summary of relevant activities conducted since the eighth session of the Committee of Experts, in particular, the work being carried out by the Working Group on Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes; an overview of the activities of its regional committees; and expert and working groups that are relevant to the standardization of geographical names; and efforts to further collaboration between the Bureau of the Committee of Experts and the Bureau of the Group of Experts, through the creation of a liaison group.

*GEGN.2/2019/1.

** Prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

I Background

1. At its eighth session, held in New York from 1-3 August 2018, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 8/114, in which it welcomed the report of the the Group of Experts (see E/C.20/2018/17), and commended its efforts to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the Committee of Experts and to identify items for collaborative work. The Committee of Experts encouraged further collaboration and welcomed the proposal to create a liaison group tasked with defining operational working relations and coordinating future collaborative work. Further, the Committee of Experts commended the cooperative activities of the Group of Experts, specifically the GeoNyms project of the Economic Commission for Africa, the work on the 14 global fundamental geospatial data themes and joint communication and training initiatives. The Committee of Experts also commended the Group of Experts for modernizing its operations in line with Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/2 of 10 November 2017 and suggested that the collocation of the Group of Expert meetings be explored as a possible cost-saving and further integration measure.

2. This report describes the activities conducted since the eighth session of the Committee of Experts, in particular, the work being carried out by the Working Group on Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes; an overview of the activities of its regional committees; and expert and working groups that are relevant to the standardization of geographical names; and efforts to further collaboration between the Bureau of the Committee of Experts and the Bureau of the Group of Experts, through the creation of a liaison group.

II Some UN-GGIM Areas of Work

3. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2016/27 on “Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management” marked five years of operation of the Committee of Experts. The resolution mandated the Committee to strengthen geospatial information management capacities in developing countries, and to streamline its role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development among other development agenda items. Pursuant to this resolution the Committee of Experts has been conducting tasks such as the creation of a Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, the development of an Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and the identification of global fundamental geospatial data themes. This section will highlight a few of the flagship work items the Committee has been undertaking.

Funding and Contributions to Support Capacity Building

4. From 2013-2017, with the support of the People’s Republic of China, through the China Trust Fund, the Committee of Experts has been able to undertake a limited number of capacity building initiatives. The Trust Fund was extended from 2018-2022, with the objective to continue to improve and strengthen national geospatial information management, systems and capacities in China and other developing countries, especially to

meet the needs of national development priorities and national implementations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (E/C.20/2018/4/Add.1)

5. Support to improve and strengthen national geospatial information management capacities towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and evidence-based policy and decision-making is being made possible through a UN Statistics Division project under the 11th tranche, 2018 to 2021, of the DESA Development Account. Supporting entities include the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), and the Regional Committees of UN-GGIM for Africa and Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM: Africa and UN-GGIM-AP).

UN-GGIM Regional Architecture

6. In 2018 the Committee of Experts completed the establishment of its global regional architecture with the formal establishment of the UN-GGIM: United Nations System Network. This network will join the existing members of the architecture that consists of five UN-GGIM regional committees, the UN-GGIM: Geospatial Societies, the UN-GGIM: Academic Network and the UN-GGIM: Private Sector Network. In addition, efforts are being made to leverage existing UN systems mechanisms and structures to effectively strengthen geospatial information management. This is being done by encouraging coordination and collaboration between the five UN-GGIM regional committees and the five UN Regional Commissions.

UN-GGIM Strategic Framework

7. At its eighth session the Committee of Experts noted the “2018-2022 Strategic Framework”, which is an update of the 2017-2021 Strategic Framework, that provides a high-level one-page overview of the Committee’s mission, vision, strategic objectives, global policy framework, geospatial challenges and drivers, benefits and efficiencies, operating principles and working activities. The UN-GGIM global and regional expert and working groups were encouraged to ensure that their work is aligned with the objectives of the Strategic Framework. See Annex 1 in report [E/C.20/2018/4/Add.1](#) for the 2018-2022 Strategic Framework.

Federated Information System for the SDGs

8. Recognizing the urgent need for countries to be able to provide national reporting on the SDGs, in March 2017, the UNSD and Esri agreed to initiate and conduct a research and learning exercise with the aim of exploring the feasibility of establishing a modern platform for collaboration among producers and users of statistical and geospatial data and information across national and global statistical systems. After two pilots, implementation by 15 countries and global presentations, there is now a federated system of national and global data hubs for the Sustainable Development Goals which facilitates the integration of different data sources; promotes data interoperability; fosters collaboration among partners from different stakeholder groups, including the geospatial community and other data providers; and improves data flows and global reporting on the SDGs. Additional national

statistical offices and national geospatial agencies are now joining to expand the Federated Information System for the SDGs. (E/CN.3/2019/3)

Integrated Geospatial Information Framework

9. A major work item of the Committee of Experts is the preparation of the Integrated Geospatial Information Frameworkⁱ, which is being developed with the assistance of the World Bank. This document aims to provide an overarching strategic policy guide and reference for countries that are developing, strengthening and modernizing their national geospatial information management, systems and infrastructure, capacities and capabilities, and offers the opportunity for Member States to leverage new funding streams. The framework is a three-part document, Part 1 - the overarching strategic framework details seven underpinning principles, eight goals and nine strategic pathways that lead to a national approach that takes account of national circumstances, priorities and perspectives. Part 2 - the implementation guide, is the detail document that will provide the ‘what’, the specific guidance and actions to be taken in implementing the Framework. Part 3 – will be country-level action plans that will provide templates and guides to operationalize the Framework in a national and sub-national context. It will provide the ‘how, when and who’ approach, to assist countries to prepare and implement their own country-level Action Plans taking into consideration national circumstances and priorities. The Committee of Experts in August 2018 adopted Part 1 and agreed in principle with the structure and main elements of Part 2 (decision 8/113). The preparation of Part 2 is ongoing with the support of regionally based expert consultations and meetings. It is intended that the draft Part 2: Implementation Guide will be launched for global consultation at the ninth session of the Committee of Experts. For more information on this work item see the report [E/C.20/2018/16/Add.1](#)

UN World Geospatial Information Congress

10. In the execution of its mandate to convene global forums to promote comprehensive dialogue on global geospatial information management with all relevant governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, the Committee of Experts through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with the Government of China, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Zhejiang Provincial Government, hosted the first United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) in Deqing, Zhejiang Province, China, from 19 to 21 November 2018. The congress was attended by over 2,000 participants, featured a high-level opening segment with a ministerial dialogue, four plenary sessions, thirty-five parallel sessions, three special sessions and a young geospatial professional summit. The UNWGIC concluded with the adoption of the Moganshan Declaration. More on the Congress, the programme, presentations and declaration are available at <http://ggim.un.org/unwgic/>

Sixth High Level Forum on UN-GGIM

11. The Committee of Experts, as part of its mandate, regularly convenes High Level Forums to promote dialogue on global geospatial information management with its stakeholders. The Fifth High Level Forum on UN-GGIM was held in November 2017 in Mexico City. The Sixth High Level Forum on UN-GGIM will take place at the Royal Holloway College, University of London, Windsor from 20-22 April 2020, under the theme “Changing the World- Geospatially”.

The Forum is being organized by UNSD, as the Secretariat for UN-GGIM, in collaboration with the Government of United Kingdom through the Ordnance Survey. The Forum will examine the role of emerging geospatial technology and innovation in implementing the SDGs and aims to improve and strengthen the national geospatial information management capacities of countries.

III Collaborative Activities

12. This section of the report provides an overview of the activities pursued as part of the efforts to build a stronger relationship between UNGEGN and the Committee of Experts. These collaborative activities include: (i) the meeting of the Bureaux at the eighth session of UN-GGIM, (ii) The Committee of Experts participation at the 30th session of UNGEGN and the 11th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN), (iii) the Group of Experts participation in the eighth session of UN-GGIM and (iv) support to the Committee of Experts work on global fundamental geospatial data themes.

Meeting of the Bureaux

13. On Thursday 2nd August 2018 both Bureaux met in a side meeting of the eighth session on UN-GGIM. The meeting was attended by 20 persons from both Bureaux and the UN Secretariat and regional commissions. Three UNGEGN members participated via WebEx. Representatives from all five UN-GGIM regional committees - Africa, the Americas, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific and Europe participated in the meeting.

14. Representatives of both expert bodies shared that a mix of regional, national and global activities were ongoing, such as the work being done on the UN-GGIM Fundamental Data Themes. Suggested action items emanating from the meeting included: (i) the creation of an inventory of institutional arrangements to be used to develop a typology of UN-GGIM and UNGEGN organizations, to be circulated to both bodies for discussion; (ii) exploring the possible collaboration with the UN-GGIM Academic Network to consider including geographical names in the delivery of GIS education and training; and (iii) pursue the creation of a liaison group with representatives from both bodies with responsibilities to identify and create a priority list of collaborative work items, push forward to have the work items completed, and provide a regular flow of information between both expert bodies. The liaison group should also be responsible for taking the lead in deciding how the interaction between both bodies should be managed. Both Bureaux are to be consulted to nominate representatives for the liaison group. It was agreed that the liaison group should be created on the free volition of both bodies and not forced.

15. During the intersessional period the UNSD which serves as the Secretariat for both bodies, shared decisions coming out of the sessions of the Committee of Experts and meetings of its Bureau and other relevant information such as meeting announcements and invitations with the Group of Experts.

Participation of the Committee of Experts at the eleventh UNCSGN and the thirtieth Session of UNGEGN

16. The seventh session of UN-GGIM, and the eleventh UNCSGN and thirtieth Session of UNGEGN were held back to back in August 2017. This provided an opportunity for experts representing both subjects - geographical names and geospatial information management, who were in the same organization to participate in both meetings. Some of these representatives were from Ethiopia, Germany, Indonesia, Panama and Slovenia.

17. The co-chair of the Committee of Experts from the United States of America delivered a special presentation during the first meeting of the eleventh UNCSGN under the agenda item four, “Reflection of the past, present and future: the fiftieth anniversary of the UNCSGN”. The presentation is available on the UNGEGN eleventh UNCSGN webpages at <https://bit.ly/2UywZ3P>. Decisions from the eighth session of UN-GGIM on strengthening collaboration with UNGEGN is provided in Section I, Background, of this report.

Participation of UNGEGN at the eighth Session of the Committee of Experts

18. At the eighth session of the Committee of Experts in August 2018, UNGEGN was represented by its rapporteur from the United States of America. He presented the report of the Group under agenda item sixteen “Strengthening of collaboration with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names”. The summary (E/C.20/2018/17), full report (E/C.20/2018/17/Add.1) and [presentation](#) are available on the UN-GGIM webpage at <http://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/8th-Session/documents/>.

Contributing to the Committee’s work on global fundamental geospatial data themes

19. The Committee of Experts and its Working Group on Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes recognize the considerable contributions made by UNGEGN’s two representatives from the United Kingdom and Germany who prepared the description of the theme “Geographical Names”, one of the 14 adopted Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes. The contribution to this theme description focused on the essence of geographical names as a data theme, noting that this more than any other inter-relates across all the themes.

20. The Working Group on Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes has developed an interactive presentation on the 14 themes which is accessible at <https://arcg.is/q9z8W>. The work of this working group is being brought to a conclusion as it has achieved its terms of reference; its final report will be presented to the Committee of Experts at its ninth session in August 2019.

IV Issues for Consideration

21. It is noted that since the first meeting between both Bureaux in 2017 and the subsequent meeting in 2018 there has been no emerging substantive practical collaborative activity to strengthen relations. The Group of Experts has demonstrated its interest in strengthening relations with UN-GGIM through the 2017 paper “[Relationship of UNGEGN with UN-GGIM- Building Bridges](#)” tendered at the seventh session on UN-GGIM. The paper defines three pathways to collaboration, at the global, regional and national levels. The Group of Experts has also identified their liaison persons in fulfilment of decision 8/114 from the eighth session of UN-GGIM. The

General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/72/306 encourages ECOSOC, the parent body of both UNGEGN and UN-GGIM, to create synergies and coherence among its subsidiary bodies. At minimum it is hoped that both bodies will be able to allocate human resources needed to further explore and identify potential areas for collaboration and joint activities.

22. The following potential areas for collaboration are being brought to the attention of the Group of Expert for their consideration: (i) at the national level where national mapping agencies/geospatial information management agencies and geographical names authorities are separate organizations, both may consider forging links to share and exchange technical expertise, share geographical names data, and conduct joint data collection exercises among other cost saving and efficiency initiatives; (ii) work jointly to encourage and communicate the benefits of geographical names standardization and the importance of creating names authorities; (iii) pursue joint capacity building initiatives particularly for those countries in transition and on the cusp of implementing national geospatial information management systems; and (iv) the Group of Experts contribute to the preparation of the data strategic pathway of the UN-GGIM Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, Implementation Guide.

i “Integrated Geospatial Information Framework” Part 1: Overarching Strategic Framework, <http://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/8th-Session/documents/Part%201-IGIF-Overarching-Strategic-Framework-24July2018.pdf>