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

New York, 29 April–3 May 2019

Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports: Divisions of the Group of Experts****Report of the Norden Division****Summary\*\***

The full report outlines the activities carried out by the Norden Division since the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and includes materials of common interest to the Division.

The main activity for the Norden Division was the convening of a joint meeting with the Dutch- and German-speaking Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, as part of a larger event that included a scientific symposium and joint working groups meetings, held in Brussels from 11 to 13 October and hosted by the National Geographic Institute of Belgium. The scope of the symposium was to highlight the role and importance of expert knowledge in the steps needed to standardize geographical names, including to establish a national framework for standardization, select name variations for a given geographical feature, determine a written form, and implement, promote and evaluate authorized name forms. The symposium also served to highlight conflicting views and interests with regard to the standardization of geographical names and to stimulate discussions on how to manage and balance such views and interests. A total of 19 members of the Norden Division attended the event, giving presentations and engaging in relevant and valuable discussions and knowledge-sharing. The Norden Division was especially proud to have been able to welcome three experts on Sámi names, one expert on Kven names and one expert on Inuit names, reflecting the multilingual dimension of the Division. As the event helped to show, the approach to standardizing geographical names varies from country to country in terms of organization, principles, policies and procedures. The web page<sup>1</sup> dedicated to the event, including

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\* [GEGN.2/2019/1](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st_session_UNGEKN.html).

\*\* The full report was prepared by Ingvil Nordland and Peder Gammeltoft. The report will be available at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st\\_session\\_UNGEKN.html](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st_session_UNGEKN.html), in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2019/77/CRP.77.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/Brussels.html>.



the agenda, list of participants, presentations, documents and photographs, is available on the website of the Group of Experts.

The Nordic countries share a common interest with regard to legislation on geographical names. All the countries within the Norden Division have laws and regulations on language and language use, but only a few have specific laws on geographical names. In Iceland and Norway, geographical names have merited special legislation, while in Sweden, geographical names are protected under the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act, which provides instructions on maintaining a good place name practice. In Finland, there have been several attempts to legally regulate geographical names standardization, with the most recent initiative dating back to 2011. In Denmark, principles and the scope for legislation on geographical names are laid out in a Department order.

Another subject of interest to the Nordic countries concerns the extensive toponymic dataset in the region, including name archives with collection of geographical names.

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