



STATEMENT/INTERVENTION

Item Number: Agenda item 7, document GEGN.2/2021/CRP.125	
Item Name: Geographical names and the environment	
Statement/intervention provided by: New Zealand	
Statement/intervention:	
<p>Monsieur/Madame Chair,</p> <p>New Zealand is pleased to offer its full support to the report GEGN.2/2021/CRP.125 'Geographical names and the environment', submitted by the distinguished delegate from Australia. New Zealand acknowledges the important connections between geographical names and our natural environment. This is especially relevant given global concern for climate change and the UN's own expectations from its 2030 agenda to improve sustainable life, equality and wellbeing for all humanity. UNGEGN's new Strategic Plan recognizes the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with challenges including climate and environmental degradation. In New Zealand, our national naming authority's Te Rautaki Strategy 2020 2025 includes the objective 'We take account of the impact of climate change on places and their naming'.</p> <p>New Zealand is sure that all Member States will agree that geographical names play a large part in supporting infrastructure, administration, management, statistics and communications relating to preserving, educating, protecting and sustaining our immediate, wider and global environments.</p> <p>Australia's report asks Member States to share examples of geographical names and naming practices that have improved human understanding of the natural environment and/or seek to influence the level of human impact on the natural environment. A New Zealand example is in conservation, where protected areas are designated or classified with a reserve status and also named. Several different pieces of legislation govern access to and protection of flora and fauna, water and airspace, and management arrangements: Conservation Act 1987, Reserves Act 1977, Marine Reserves Act 1971, and National Parks Act 1980. New Zealand's national naming authority has a legislative part to play in naming protected areas in each of these four Acts. In the most recent UNGEGN Bulletin #59, the article from New Zealand makes the connection between the naming of Tongariro National Park, which is a world heritage area, and its gifting by the indigenous people, noting that the sustainability theme applies equally to environment and cultural knowledge, as well as language revitalisation. New Zealand also has a policy to avoid excessive naming in pristine areas: a fundamental characteristic of a wilderness area being that features are nameless and that the cultural overlay of civilisation is absent. The concept of 'wilderness' has no cultural equivalent in Māori. So New Zealand's national naming authority typically discourages name proposals in designated wilderness areas as well as pristine/remote conservation areas with similar wilderness characteristics.</p> <p>New Zealand supports further discussion on this topic, such as by a working group or similar platform.</p>	
Submitted on:	4/16/2021