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Agenda item 18 (i)

**Economic and environmental questions: geospatial information****Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names on its 2023 session****(New York, 1–5 May 2023)***Summary*

The 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was held at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 5 May 2023, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2021/261.

The present report describes the activities during the session and presents the major findings of the Group of Experts, focusing primarily on the importance of its work to support Member States in the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names and the establishment of national geographical names authorities.



## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention . . .	4
A. Recommendations for adoption by the Council . . . . .	4
Recommendation 1 . . . . .	4
Recommendation 2 . . . . .	4
Recommendation 3 . . . . .	4
B. Decisions brought to the attention of the Council . . . . .	4
3/2023/1. Report of the Chair . . . . .	5
3/2023/2. Report of the Secretariat . . . . .	5
3/2023/3. National reports . . . . .	5
3/2023/4. Activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa . . . . .	6
3/2023/5. Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 and of the work of the Group of Experts . . . . .	6
3/2023/6. Reports of the divisions . . . . .	6
3/2023/7. National and international meetings and conferences . . . . .	7
3/2023/8. Cooperation and liaison with other international organizations . . . . .	7
3/2023/9. Cooperation and liaison with the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management . . . . .	8
3/2023/10. National and international standardization of geographical names: names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation; toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use . . . . .	8
3/2023/11. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions . . . . .	8
3/2023/12. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects . .	9
3/2023/13. Toponymic education . . . . .	9
3/2023/14. Toponymic terminology . . . . .	10
3/2023/15. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including Indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues . . . . .	10
3/2023/16. Exonyms . . . . .	10
3/2023/17. Report of the Secretariat – World Geographical Names Database . . . . .	10
3/2023/18. Geographical names data management . . . . .	11
3/2023/19. Writing systems and pronunciation . . . . .	12
3/2023/20. Other geographical names issues . . . . .	12
3/2023/21. Future of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding and the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation . . . . .	12
3/2023/22. Strengthening relationships, links and connections . . . . .	13

II.	Items considered by the Group of Experts .....	13
A.	Reports of the Chair and the Secretariat .....	13
B.	Reports (national, divisional, activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa and national and international meetings and conferences).....	14
C.	Report on liaison with other organizations .....	15
D.	National and international standardization of geographical names.....	16
E.	Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions .....	16
F.	Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work, 2021–2029, and of the work of the Group of Experts.....	17
G.	Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects (Working Group on Publicity and Funding) .....	17
H.	Toponymic education (Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy) .....	18
I.	Toponymic terminology (Working Group on Toponymic Terminology) .....	18
J.	Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including Indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues (Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage).....	18
K.	Exonyms (Working Group on Exonyms) .....	19
L.	Geographical names data management (Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management).....	19
M.	Writing systems and pronunciation (Working Group on Romanization Systems) .....	20
N.	Other geographical issues.....	20
O.	Special presentations .....	20
P.	Panel discussions .....	21
III.	Provisional agenda, venue and dates of the 2025 session .....	21
IV.	Adoption of the decisions and the report.....	22
V.	Organization of the session.....	22
A.	Opening and duration of the session .....	22
B.	Attendance.....	22
C.	Officers of the session .....	23
D.	Opening statements.....	24
E.	Adoption of the agenda and organization of work .....	24
F.	Documentation .....	25
Annex		
	List of geographical and linguistic divisions.....	26

## **I. Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention**

### **A. Recommendations for adoption by the Council**

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following:

#### **Recommendation 1**

The Economic and Social Council commends the achievements and the ongoing work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the standardization of geographical names and its contribution to the management and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and decides to support cooperation between the Group of Experts and United Nations Maps.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Economic and Social Council decides that the appropriate working groups of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, namely, the Working Groups on Geographical Names Data Management, on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage and on Romanization Systems, shall work to populate the World Geographical Names Database in order to ensure that toponyms are accurately reflected across all languages, including those with non-Roman alphabets or scripts, to strengthen relationships, links and connections in geographical names standardization, and in this regard requests:

(a) The mobilization of resources to support the integration of other toponymic datasets in the Database, including those pertaining to culture, heritage and identity;

(b) A report that explores the role of semantic web technologies in the context of the World Geographical Names Database and provides recommendations, where appropriate, to the Group of Experts at its 2025 session for consideration;

(c) The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Geospatial Information Section of the Office of Information and Communications Technology to work with the Group of Experts through its Bureau and working groups to review existing data within the World Geographical Names Database and work with Member States to resolve linguistic, geographical and other data quality issues.

#### **Recommendation 3**

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its 2023 session (E/2023/84);

(b) Decides that the 2025 session of the Group of Experts shall be held from 28 April to 2 May 2025;

(c) Approves the provisional agenda of the 2025 session ([GEGN.2/2023/L.1](#)).

### **B. Decisions brought to the attention of the Council**

2. The following decisions adopted by the Group of Experts are brought to the attention of the Council:

**Decision 3/2023/1**  
**Report of the Chair**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the report of the Chair of the Group of Experts;
- (b) Appreciated the leadership of the Chair, the work of the Bureau and the working group conveners and the support from the Statistics Division in arranging and preparing for the 2023 session;
- (c) Encouraged the adoption of good practices of the Group of Experts in order to advance the integration of the Strategic Plan over the next six years, such as the prioritization of work products and recording of all the strategies and actions of the Group of Experts in the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029, grounding decisions in the principles of the United Nations and further mobilization of the linguistic/geographical divisions as well as all stakeholders.

**Decision 3/2023/2**  
**Report of the Secretariat**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Expressed appreciation for the report of the Secretariat and the call to strengthen the operations and work of the Group of Experts;
- (b) Noted that the Secretariat had suggested an approach to address the review of the working groups, and committed to further discussion on providing guidance on how that exercise might be efficiently conducted;
- (c) Welcomed the model national report submitted by the East Central and South-East Europe Division;
- (d) Called for the organization of an appropriate framework to support the strengthening or creation of national names authorities as well as a Group of Experts trust fund.

**Decision 3/2023/3**  
**National reports**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the reports submitted by 52 countries under this agenda item and expressed appreciation for the thematic consideration of those reports in the form of a national dialogue addressed throughout the session;
- (b) Noted that the reports covered themes including national names standardization processes, cultural aspects of geographical names such as Indigenous and minority names, technology and toponymic databases, promotion and training on geographical names and collaboration between two or more Member States and with academia, and that the presentations engendered wide-ranging discussion and concluded with a call to consider greater work emphasis on topics such as crowd sourcing and data validation;
- (c) Encouraged experts to refer to the full national reports to use as a guide to inform on topics of common interest in national geographical names standardization.

**Decision 3/2023/4**

**Activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report submitted by the Coordinator of the Task Team for Africa and expressed appreciation for the continued activity of the Task Team, despite the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;

(b) Noted the holding of a well-attended meeting with lively debate, in Addis Ababa in October 2022, stressing the importance of the standardization of geographical names and expressing the desire to revitalize existing structures or to create new ones for countries that did not yet have them;

(c) Recognized that the Task Team for Africa had decided to promote and elevate the already existing Sub-Working Group on Standardization of Geographical Names in Africa into a Working Group on the same level as the four existing Working Groups of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Regional Committee for Africa;

(d) Acknowledged the long history of the Task Team for Africa, and its regular meetings and active partnerships, while noting that many African countries still had to establish geographical names management structures;

(e) Regretted the relatively small number of African States represented at the 2023 session of the Group of Experts.

**Decision 3/2023/5**

**Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 and of the work of the Group of Experts**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the report and the work of the Bureau and working group conveners on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 during the two years since its adoption, affirming the need to continue to contribute to its implementation in order to ensure its success;

(b) Reaffirmed that the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 would continue to serve as a guiding framework for the Group of Experts and for geographical names standardization of Member States;

(c) Supported the adoption of the amendments to action items 1-i-5, 2-i-5, 2-iii-10, 3-iii-10, 5-i-1 and 5-ii-3 in the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 proposed by the Bureau;

(d) Agreed to consider and express views on priorities to be decided in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029;

(e) Encouraged Member States to align their standardization activities to the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029.

**Decision 3/2023/6**

**Reports of the divisions**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report of the Bureau and the Secretariat of the Group of Experts and the reports submitted by divisions;

(b) Acknowledged the need expressed by some divisions for more support from the Bureau and the Secretariat, including space on the website to archive divisional matters;

(c) Adopted the guideline entitled “Responsibilities of Divisional Chairs and Executive Group”;

(d) Encouraged Member States to participate in divisional activities and to revitalize inactive divisions;

(e) Encouraged the divisions to actively contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 on the strategies and related actions as outlined in table 4 entitled “Strategic Plan and Programme of Work – work items relevant to Divisions” of the report of the Bureau and the Secretariat.

### **Decision 3/2023/7**

#### **National and international meetings and conferences**

The Group of Experts took note of the two reports on national and international meetings and conferences and acknowledged the efforts demonstrated by those meetings and conferences.

### **Decision 3/2023/8**

#### **Cooperation and liaison with other international organizations**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed and noted the reports on liaison with other organizations;

(b) Reaffirmed the importance of relationships between the Group of Experts and the organizations with which it maintains liaison;

(c) Noted the invitation to the Group of Experts extended by the Joint International Cartographic Association/International Geographical Union Commission on Toponymy to join the Commission;

(d) Called upon the International Council of Onomastic Sciences to report on the proceedings of its 2024 Congress;

(e) Endorsed the International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names, noted with appreciation the contribution of experts of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to that document, and encouraged the member countries of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research to use the principles and procedures;

(f) Supported further cooperation with the United Nations Geospatial Network and United Nations Maps and in that regard urged:

(i) That the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names explore collaboration with the United Nations Maps programme on geographical names, led by the Geospatial Information Section of the Office of Information and Communications Technology, as a means to operationalize the work and knowledge of the Group of Experts through the delivery of various mandates of the United Nations system;

(ii) That the United Nations Geospatial Network of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and appropriate representatives of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names establish an appropriate mechanism to promote the work and importance of the Group of Experts and geographical names to the United Nations system, in particular by

highlighting the important role of the geographical names theme, one of the global fundamental geospatial data themes;

(g) Recognized the activities and progress that the International Hydrographic Organization had achieved in naming undersea and maritime features and encouraged national names authorities to submit proposals for undersea feature names to the International Hydrographic Organization/Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Subcommittee on Undersea Feature Names and to promote the work of undersea feature names standardization within their respective programmes of work.

**Decision 3/2023/9**

**Cooperation and liaison with the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of two reports on strengthening collaboration with the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management;

(b) Recognized that the Committee of Experts had acknowledged and supported the proposal to collaborate on the development of a compendium of institutional arrangements on shared good practices for geographical names standardization between national mapping and geospatial agencies and national names authorities, to increase cooperation, create synergies and share knowledge and good practices for the standardization of geographical names;

(c) Welcomed the offer by Indonesia to assist with the development of a compendium of good practices of the Group of Experts and the Committee of Experts at the national level.

**Decision 3/2023/10**

**National and international standardization of geographical names: names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation; toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports and welcomed the interesting exploration of issues and achievements emerging in the range of national standardization programmes;

(b) Encouraged experts to continue developments in naming principles and procedures relevant to their geographical context and report them to the Group of Experts;

(c) Welcomed the recent updates to the inventory of toponymic guidelines and their dissemination through the website of the Group of Experts, recognizing the reference value of the guidelines to the Group of Experts;

(d) Encouraged Member States to prepare new guidelines or update existing ones and report to the Group of Experts at its subsequent sessions.

**Decision 3/2023/11**

**Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the reports and expressed appreciation for the breadth of information made available, such as benefits of names standardization in case of



disaster response, establishing naming and renaming principles, legislative requirements for public participation, and resolution of a disputed case;

(b) Appreciated the progress made by the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation on the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029, motivating the implementation of resolutions and recommendations and maintaining and updating the multilingual database for resolutions and recommendations with the technical support of the National Geographic Information Institute of the Republic of Korea;

(c) Supported the proposed change from working group convener to a coordinator for the functions that continued to be needed;

(d) Also supported the suggestion that the Bureau and the Statistics Division enable the collection of procedural guidelines for national naming authorities and that they publish guidelines that include approaches to geographical name changes.

### **Decision 3/2023/12**

#### **Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report and appreciated the work of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding during the intersessional period on raising awareness;

(b) Welcomed the publication of themed issues of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names Information Bulletin and called for the continued identification of themes relevant to geographical names standardization;

(c) Encouraged further exploration of creating a Group of Experts trust fund to be used to support the participation of developing countries and to conduct toponymic training events;

(d) Noted with regret that the current working group convener had stepped down.

### **Decision 3/2023/13**

#### **Toponymic education**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports and welcomed the developments in online training courses in toponymy developed by the Group of Experts;

(b) Noted the good practices of Member States supporting each other in geographical names standardization capacity-building and training initiatives at the regional, bilateral and national levels and encouraged the continuation of those efforts;

(c) Supported efforts to restore, empower, promote and preserve geographical names of Indigenous heritage by making them available as spatial datasets;

(d) Noted with interest the suggestion to explore with the Unicode Consortium adding missing characters to the Unicode character set;

(e) Welcomed the upcoming training course on toponymy to be held in Bali, Indonesia, for the Asia South-East Division and encouraged Member States to submit requests for training to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy.

**Decision 3/2023/14**

**Toponymic terminology**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports, expressed appreciation for the preparation of glossaries of geographical terms and encouraged such reports in future sessions;

(b) Requested Member States to continue to suggest, and the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology to address, proposals for additions, modifications and corrections to the database of toponymic terminology;

(c) Endorsed the recommendations of the Working Group for additions and changes to the terminology database.

**Decision 3/2023/15**

**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including Indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports and appreciated the wide range of topics shared, including map products, regulations, best practice for Indigenous naming, derogatory names, world heritage sites, Indigenous and minority language names, commercial and commemorative naming, legislation, policies and best practices;

(b) Supported the continuation of the sharing of national experiences and engagement, especially noting the increased attention by the Group of Experts on the importance of all cultural heritage matters;

(c) Acknowledged the collective increased awareness of the Group of Experts of the emotional and spiritual aspects of cultural heritage in geographical naming, which offer improved connection, identity and belonging, contributing to equitable recognition of Indigenous geographical names.

**Decision 3/2023/16**

**Exonyms**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports and reaffirmed decision 2/2021/12 on exonyms taken at its 2021 session;

(b) Decided that there was a need to issue a recommendation, for consideration at the 2025 session of the Group of Experts, that reconciles the resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names on exonyms and its acknowledgement of exonyms as part of cultural heritage, and that the Working Group on Exonyms should continue further discussions towards achieving this;

(c) Appreciated the work and deliberation on exonyms conducted by the experts during and subsequent to the meeting of the Working Group held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2022.

**Decision 3/2023/17**

**Report of the Secretariat – World Geographical Names Database**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretariat and commended the redevelopment of the World Geographical Names Database as a global repository of toponymic data

that would help to raise awareness and promote the use of national standardized names on maps and in documents;

(b) Urged Member States to contribute to the Database to ensure that toponyms were accurately reflected across all languages, including those with non-Roman alphabets or scripts, to strengthen relationships, links and connections in geographical names standardization;

(c) Welcomed the support of its Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management to consider an appropriate data governance mechanism with the Secretariat, and in that regard:

(i) Welcomed the concept of a unique and standardized identifier for cities and other geographical features within the Database;

(ii) Requested the Statistics Division, within available resources, to enhance the functionality of and data in the Database;

(d) In recognition of the potential value of incorporating semantic web technologies to link the database to a broader data ecosystem, called for the relevant working groups and the Statistics Division to explore ways to further enhance the capabilities of the Database to support linked open data applications and advance the use of authoritative, multilingual geographical names across multiple data platforms;

(e) Welcomed the offers of assistance in terms of data and support and in that regard urged greater mobilization of resources to support the integration of other toponymic datasets in the Database, including those pertaining to culture, heritage and identity.

### **Decision 3/2023/18 Geographical names data management**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the information made available, the active participation and the efforts undertaken by Member States to inform about and enhance geographical names data management;

(b) Took note of the reports and affirmed the support for strategy 1, Technical expertise, of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029, outlined for the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management for the period 2023–2025, and the willingness of Member States to participate and contribute to the action items identified within the Programme of Work;

(c) Reaffirmed that linked data was another stage in the evolution of data management methodologies of the Group of Experts;

(d) Encouraged Member States:

(i) To consider linked data in their approaches to geographical names standardization;

(ii) To contribute further to the monitoring of the availability of free, easily accessible, and authorized data on digital geographical names;

(e) Requested the Working Group to continue to facilitate collaboration and workshops on technical issues between national names authorities and practitioners in order to provide practical guidance on organizational and technical issues and processes;

(f) Also requested the Working Group to further coordinate the monitoring of the availability of free, easily accessible and authorized data on digital geographical names;

(g) Further requested the Working Group to take action on the publication of the content and invite standardization bodies to provide input and comments on the ideas presented on:

(i) Geospatial information-sharing, accessibility and dissemination-related standards;

(ii) Specific issues related to geographical names data modelling.

### **Decision 3/2023/19**

#### **Writing systems and pronunciation**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the report, acknowledged the outstanding contribution of a Co-Convenor during 25 years of service, and noted with regret his intention to step down from the convenership;

(b) Agreed to continue to investigate innovative methods to be used for romanization;

(c) Noted the work on transliteration between non-Roman script writing systems and encouraged Member States to continue such projects;

(d) Encouraged all Member States to continue to share ongoing work with the Working Group on Romanization Systems towards further implementation of existing United Nations romanization systems and towards the adoption of new national systems.

### **Decision 3/2023/20**

#### **Other geographical names issues**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports and adopted the updated Group of Experts list of country names;

(b) Decided to replace the Working Group on Country Names with a Coordinator to update the list of country names;

(c) Noted that the current acting Chair of the Asia East Division (other than China) had stepped down and that his interest in establishing a language-based division in Asia (shared writing system of Chinese characters) would be passed on to his successor.

### **Decision 3/2023/21**

#### **Future of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding and the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Supported the disbanding of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding and of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation;

(b) Welcomed the transfer of the work on publicity to the newly established Coordinator for Evaluation and Implementation, under the name Coordinator for Evaluation, Implementation and Publicity;

(c) Acknowledged the transfer of the work on funding to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy.

### **Decision 3/2023/22**

#### **Strengthening relationships, links and connections**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the theme of its 2023 session, “Strengthening relationships, links and connections in geographical names standardization and for sustainable development and pandemic recovery”;

(b) Also welcomed the convening of the panel discussion on the same theme, noting with appreciation the interests and diverse viewpoints expressed by five panellists;

(c) Recognized that strengthening relationships, links and connections between the Group of Experts and other actors related to geographical names, including national naming authorities, bodies of the United Nations, scientific, technical and academic groups, and private map-makers or map users, would increase the capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and aid recovery from the pandemic, but also that there were restrictions and barriers;

(d) Requested the Bureau and relevant working groups to take measures to find organized ways of sharing expertise on geographical names standardization and proper dissemination and correct use of standardized geographical names.

## **II. Items considered by the Group of Experts**

### **A. Reports of the Chair and the Secretariat**

3. The Group of Experts considered item 3 of its agenda at its 1st and 8th to 10th meetings, on 1, 4 and 5 May 2023. It had before it the report of the Chair ([GEGN.2/2023/3](#)), which was presented by the Chair of the Group of Experts, the report of the Secretariat ([GEGN.2/2023/4/CRP.4](#)) and the document entitled “World Geographical Names Database” ([GEGN.2/2023/111/CRP.111](#)), which were introduced by the representatives of the Secretariat.

4. At the 1st and 8th meetings, on 1 and 4 May, the Chair, representatives of the Norden Division, the United States of America/Canada Division, the United Kingdom Division, the Arabic Division, the Africa West Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the South-West Pacific Division, the China Division and the Asia South-East Division made comments and raised questions, to which the representatives of the Secretariat responded. The Chair and the representatives of the Secretariat made summary statements.

#### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

5. At its 9th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted two draft decisions submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decisions 3/2023/1 and 3/2023/2). At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted one draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/17).

## **B. Reports (national, divisional, activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa and national and international meetings and conferences)**

6. The Group of Experts considered item 4 (a) to (d) concerning national and divisional reports and reports on activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa and national and international meetings and conferences, at its 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th and 10th meetings, from 1 to 5 May 2023. At those meetings, the Group of Experts had before it, for information and discussion, 52 reports submitted by the Member States, 14 reports by its geographical and linguistic divisions, 1 report submitted by the UNGEGN Bureau and the Secretariat, the report of the Task Team for Africa and 2 reports on international meetings and conferences.

### *National dialogue*

7. At the 1st meeting, on 1 May, the Group of Experts heard presentations in the form of a national dialogue on national names standardization by the United Kingdom, Argentina, Denmark, Poland, Japan and Saudi Arabia. Representatives of Finland, Indonesia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, Cyprus and Greece made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Co-Convener of the Working Group on Romanization Systems, who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement. The representative of Türkiye made a statement in the exercise of the right of reply.

8. At its 3rd meeting, on 2 May, the Group of Experts heard presentations in the form of a national dialogue on cultural aspects of geographical names standardization by Cabo Verde, Slovenia, Peru, Estonia and Austria. Representatives of the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the United Kingdom Division, the Arabic Division and the observer of the International Cartographic Association made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Rapporteur (New Zealand), who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

9. At its 5th meeting, on 3 May, the Group of Experts heard presentations in the form of a national dialogue on technology, innovation and standards for geographical names data management by Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, Greece, Czechia, Denmark and Latvia. Representatives of the United States of America/Canada Division, the Arabic Division, the United Kingdom Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Asia South-East Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Norden Division and the China Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Convener of the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management, who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

10. At its 7th meeting, on 4 May, the Group of Experts heard presentations in the form of a national dialogue on cooperation, training and promotion by Italy, Finland, Indonesia, Iceland, Cyprus, New Zealand, Malaysia, Norway and the Republic of Korea. Representatives of the United Kingdom Division, the Asia East Division (other than China) and the East Central and South-East Europe Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Convener of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

11. At its 9th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts heard presentations in the form of a national dialogue on romanization, pronunciation, maritime names and other topics by Armenia, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Canada and Brunei

Darussalam. Representatives of Austria, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Japan, the United States, Oman and Saudi Arabia made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Rapporteur (United Kingdom), who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

#### *Divisional reports*

12. At its 2nd meeting, on 1 May, the Group of Experts heard presentations on the report on the Division of the Group of Experts (GEGN.2/2023/77/CRP.113) by the Chair; and on the report on the publication and archiving of information on the geographical and linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts on the Group's website (GEGN.2/2023/77/CRP.77) by the Convener of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding.

13. At the same meeting, on 1 May, representatives of the Arabic Division, the Africa West Division, the Asia South-East Division, the Norden Division, the Latin America Division, the China Division, the Baltic Division, the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the United States of America/Canada Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Portuguese-speaking Division and the observer of the International Cartographic Association made comments or raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Chair made a summary statement.

#### *Activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa*

14. At the 1st meeting, on 1 May, the Group of Experts heard a presentation on the report of the Task Team for Africa (see [GEGN.2/2023/114](#)) by the Coordinator of the Task Team for Africa.

15. At the same meeting, representatives of Mauritania and Burundi made comments. The Chair made a summary statement.

#### *National and international meetings and conferences*

16. At the 2nd meeting, on 1 May, the Group of Experts heard a presentation on the report of the International Symposium on the Standardization of Geographical Names, "Introducing the efforts and contributions by UNGEGN and Japan" (GEGN.2/2023/138/CRP.138) by the expert of the Asia East Division (other than China). The Chair made a summary statement.

#### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

17. At its 9th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted two draft decisions submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decisions 3/2023/3 and 3/2023/7) and one draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/6). At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted one draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/4).

### **C. Report on liaison with other organizations**

18. The Group of Experts considered item 5 of its agenda at its 2nd, 3rd and 10th meetings, on 1, 2 and 5 May 2023. At its 2nd meeting, on 1 May, under agenda item 5, it had before it six reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the representatives of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, the International Cartographic Association, the International Council of Onomastic Sciences, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, the Convener of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding and the International Hydrographic

Organization. At its 3rd meeting, under item 5 (c), the Group of Experts had before it the report of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, which was presented by a representative of the Secretariat, and the report on cooperation and liaison with other organizations: Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (GEGN.2/2023/115/CRP.115), which was presented by the Convener of the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management.

19. At the 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 1 and 2 May, the Chair, representatives of the China Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the United Kingdom Division, the Arabic Division and the Asia South-East Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters, the Chair and the Director of the Statistics Division responded. The Vice-Chair (Australia), who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made summary statements.

#### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

20. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted two draft decisions, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decisions 3/2023/8 and 3/2023/22) and one draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/9).

### **D. National and international standardization of geographical names**

21. The Group of Experts considered item 6 of its agenda at its 3rd, 4th and 10th meetings, on 2 and 5 May 2023. At its 3rd meeting, on 2 May, under agenda item 6 (a), it had before it five reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the representatives of China, Austria and Indonesia. At its 4th meeting, on 2 May, under agenda 6 (b), it had before it two reports for information and one report for information and discussion, which was introduced by the Coordinator for Toponymic Guidelines.

22. Also at the 3rd and 4th meetings, on 2 May, the Chair, representatives of the Asia East Division (other than China), the Latin America Division, the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the China Division, the Asia South-East Division, the Norden Division, the United Kingdom Division and observers of the International Cartographic Association and the International Hydrographic Organization made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Vice-Chair (Republic of Korea), who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made summary statements.

#### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

23. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/10).

### **E. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions**

24. The Group of Experts considered item 7 of its agenda at its 4th and 10th meetings, on 2 and 5 May 2023. At its 4th meeting, on 2 May, it had before it two reports for information and seven reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the representatives of Canada, the Chair, the representatives of Indonesia and Saudi Arabia and the Convener of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation.



25. At the same meeting, representatives of the Pacific South-West Division, the Arabic Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Asia South-East Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the China Division, the Africa West Division, the United Kingdom Division, the East Central and South-East Europe Division and the observer from Google made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters and the Chair responded. The Vice-Chair (Republic of Korea), who facilitated the discussion on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

26. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/11).

**F. Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work, 2021–2029, and of the work of the Group of Experts**

27. The Group of Experts considered item 8 of its agenda at its 2nd and 9th meetings, on 1 and 5 May 2023. At its 2nd meeting, on 1 May, it had before it two reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the Vice-Chair (Republic of Korea) and the representative of New Zealand.

28. At the same meeting, representatives of the Asia East Division (other than China), the Arabic Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) and the Africa West Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Vice-Chair (Republic of Korea), who also facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

29. At its 9th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/5).

**G. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects (Working Group on Publicity and Funding)**

30. The Group of Experts considered item 9 of its agenda at its 5th and 10th meetings, on 3 and 5 May 2023. At its 5th meeting, it had before it a report for information and discussion, which was introduced by the Convener of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding.

31. At the same meeting, representatives of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division and the Latin America Division made comments and raised questions, to which the Convener of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding responded. The Convener of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding, who also facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

32. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/12) and a draft decision, submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/21).

## **H. Toponymic education (Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy)**

33. The Group of Experts considered item 10 of its agenda at its 5th, 6th and 10th meetings, on 3 and 5 May 2023. At its 5th meeting, it had before it one report for information and four reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the representatives of Mexico, Canada, the Republic of Korea and the Convener of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy.

34. At its 5th and 6th meetings, on 3 May, representatives of the Arabic Division, the United States of America/Canada Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the United Kingdom Division, the Latin America Division and the observer from Google made comments and raised questions. The Convener of the Working Group, who facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

35. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/13).

## **I. Toponymic terminology (Working Group on Toponymic Terminology)**

36. The Group of Experts considered item 11 of its agenda at its 6th and 10th meetings, on 3 and 5 May 2023. At its 6th meeting, it had before it two reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the Convener of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology and a representative of Saudi Arabia.

37. At the same meeting, representatives of the Pacific South-West Division and the Norden Division made comments and raised questions, to which the Convener of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology responded. The Convener of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology, who facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

38. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/14).

## **J. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including Indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues (Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage)**

39. The Group of Experts considered item 12 of its agenda at its 7th and 10th meetings, on 4 and 5 May 2023. At its 7th meeting, it had before it two reports for information and nine reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the representatives of Canada, New Zealand, Austria and Saudi Arabia and the observer of the International Cartographic Association.

40. At the 7th meeting, on 4 May, representatives of the Romano-Hellenic Division, the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the China Division, the Arabic Division, the Norden Division, the Pacific South-West Division and the United States of America/Canada Division made comments and raised questions, to which the

presenters responded. The Rapporteur (New Zealand), who facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

#### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

41. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/15).

### **K. Exonyms (Working Group on Exonyms)**

42. The Group of Experts considered item 13 of its agenda at its 8th and 10th meetings, on 4 and 5 May 2023. It had before it one report for information and five reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by representatives of Austria, Poland and France, the Convener of the Working Group on Exonyms and the observer of the International Cartographic Association.

43. At the 8th meeting, on 4 May, representatives of the Arabic Division, the Portuguese-speaking Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the United Kingdom Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), and the observer of the Société savante algérienne d'onomastique made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Convener of the Working Group on Exonyms, who facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

#### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

44. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/16).

### **L. Geographical names data management (Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management)**

45. The Group of Experts considered item 14 of its agenda at its 8th, 9th and 10th meetings, on 4 and 5 May 2023. At its 8th and 9th meetings, on 4 and 5 May, it had before it nine reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by the representatives of Indonesia, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Japan and Germany, the Vice-Chair (Australia), Saudi Arabia, the Convener of the Working on Group Geographical Names Data Management and the observer of the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe.

46. At these two meetings, representatives of the Arabic Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the United Kingdom Division, the Pacific South-West Division and the Romano-Hellenic Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Convener of the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management, who facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

#### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

47. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/18).

## **M. Writing systems and pronunciation (Working Group on Romanization Systems)**

48. The Group of Experts considered item 15 of its agenda at its 9th and 10th meetings, on 5 May 2023. At its 9th meeting, it had before it a report (GEGN.2/2023/CRP.11) for information and discussion, which was introduced by the Co-Convener of the Working Group on Romanization Systems. The Rapporteur (United Kingdom), who facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, made a summary statement.

### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

49. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/19).

## **N. Other geographical issues**

50. The Group of Experts considered item 16 of its agenda at its 9th and 10th meetings, on 5 May 2023. At its 9th meeting, on 5 May, it had before it two reports for information and discussion, which were introduced by Indonesia and the Coordinator for Country Names.

51. At the same meeting, representatives of Singapore, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Türkiye, China, Greece and Cyprus made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded. The Chair made a summary statement.

### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

52. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/20).

## **O. Special presentations**

53. During the session, the Group of Experts heard four special presentations and had stimulating interactive discussions. They were as follows:

(a) A special presentation delivered at the 3rd meeting, on 2 May, by a member of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Vice-Chair (Australia) facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item, and representatives of the Asia East Division (other than China), the United States of America/Canada Division, the Arabic Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Norden Division and the Asia South-East Division and the observer of the International Cartographic Association made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded;

(b) “Addressing data challenges in responding to emergencies and disasters”, delivered at the 5th meeting, on 3 May, by the representative of International Strategies at Esri. The Rapporteur (New Zealand) facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item and the representatives of the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Asia South-East Division, the Arabic Division, the United States of America/Canada Division and the observer from Google made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded;

(c) “The Gazetteers.net Web Application: a tool for harvesting digital gazetteers”, delivered at the 7th meeting, on 4 May, by the representatives of the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography and the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe. The Convener of the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management facilitated the discussions on behalf of the

Chair on this item, and the representatives of the Asia South-East Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Pacific South-West Division, the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the Arabic Division and the observer of the International Cartographic Association made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded;

(d) “Geographical names at Google: giving users the most useful names for their daily tasks”, delivered at the 9th meeting, on 5 May, by the representatives of Google. The Rapporteur (New Zealand) facilitated the discussions on behalf of the Chair on this item and the representatives of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Asia South-East Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the United States of America/Canada Division and the Arabic Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters responded.

## **P. Panel discussions**

54. During the session, the Group of Experts heard two panel discussions and had stimulating interactive discussions. They were as follows:

(a) “Strengthening relationships, links and connections in geographical names standardization and for sustainable development and pandemic recovery” at the 4th meeting, on 2 May, with representatives of the Geospatial Information Agency of Indonesia, Google, the Joint International Cartographic Association/International Geographical Union Commission on Toponymy, the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information as panellists. The Vice-Chair (Republic of Korea), who facilitated the panel, and a representative from the Arabic Division made comments and raised questions, to which the panellists responded;

(b) “Strengthening relationships, links and connections in geographical names standardization and for sustainable development and pandemic recovery” at the 6th meeting, on 4 May, with Peter Jordan (Austria); Andreas Hadjiraftis (Cyprus); Abdullah Alwelaie (Saudi Arabia); Carla Jack (Canada) and Wendy Shaw (New Zealand) as panellists. The Vice-Chair (Australia), who facilitated the panel, and representatives of the French-speaking Division and the Norden Division, as well as the observer of the Société savante algérienne d’onomastique made comments and raised questions, to which the panellists responded.

### **Action taken by the Group of Experts**

55. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as orally revised (see sect. I.B, decision 3/2023/22).

## **III. Provisional agenda, venue and dates of the 2025 session**

56. The Group of Experts considered item 19 of its agenda at its 10th meeting, on 5 May 2023. It had before it the provisional agenda for the 2025 session ([GEGN.2/2023/L.1](#)), which was introduced by a representative of the Secretariat. It decided that the 2025 session of the Group of Experts would be held at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, from 28 April to 2 May 2025.

57. At the same meeting, experts from Japan, the Republic of Korea and Greece made comments and raised questions. The Chair made statements and responded to questions.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

58. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts approved the provisional agenda for the 2025 session ([GEGN.2/2023/L.1](#)), as orally revised, as well as the dates and venue.

59. At the same meeting, the Group of Experts, under item 20 of its agenda and in accordance with rules 7 and 8 (2) of the rules of procedure, as set out in Economic and Social Council decision 2018/264, elected by acclamation the officers of the 2025 and 2027 sessions as follows:

*Chair:*

Pierre Jaillard (France)

*Vice-Chairs:*

Susan Birtles (Australia)

Sungjae Choo (Republic of Korea)

*Rapporteurs:*

Ana Cristina da Rocha Bérenger Resende (Brazil)

Wendy Shaw (New Zealand)

**IV. Adoption of the decisions and the report**

60. The Group of Experts considered items 17 and 18 of its agenda at its 9th and 10th meetings, on 5 May. It had before it the draft report on its 2023 session ([GEGN.2/2023/L.2](#)), together with an informal paper containing draft conclusions, recommendations and decisions of the session, which were introduced by the Rapporteurs.

61. At the same meetings, the Chair, the Rapporteurs and experts from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Norway, Germany, France, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Latvia and the Republic of Korea made statements and raised questions, in the course of which amendments to the draft report and informal papers were introduced.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

62. At its 10th meeting, on 5 May, the Group of Experts adopted the draft report on its 2023 session, as orally amended, together with the draft conclusions, recommendations and decisions contained in the informal paper, and entrusted the Rapporteurs with finalizing the report by reflecting the proceedings of the meeting (see sect. I.B).

**V. Organization of the session****A. Opening and duration of the session**

63. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/261, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held its 2023 session at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 5 May 2023. The Group of Experts held 10 meetings.

**B. Attendance**

64. The session was attended by 226 participants representing 62 States Members of the United Nations and the geographical and linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts (see annex) and observers. The list of participants is contained in document [GEGN.2/2023/INF/3](#).

## C. Officers of the session

65. The Officers of the session were as follows:

*Chair:*

Pierre Jaillard (France)

*Vice-Chairs:*

Susan Birtles (Australia)

Sungjae Choo (Republic of Korea)

*Rapporteurs:*

Wendy Shaw (New Zealand)

Trent Palmer (United States of America)

Catherine Cheetham (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)<sup>1</sup>

66. For the names of the Chairs of the divisions, see <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/divisions/>.

67. The Officers of the working groups were:

Task Team for Africa

*Coordinator:*

Brahim Atoui

Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use

*Coordinator:*

Jasper Hogerwerf

Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

*Convener:*

Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management

*Convener:*

Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu

Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

*Convener:*

Trent Palmer

Working Group on Romanization Systems

*Conveners:*

Peeter Päll

Catherine Cheetham

Working Group on Country Names

*Convener:*

Pierre Jaillard

Working Group on Publicity and Funding

*Convener:*

Peder Gammeltoft

<sup>1</sup> The Chair appointed Ms. Cheetham to complete the unexpired portion of the term of office of Mr. Palmer, who relinquished his functions as Rapporteur on 4 May 2023.

Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

*Convener:*

Sungjae Choo

Working Group on Exonyms

*Convener:*

Kohei Watanabe

Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

*Convener:*

Annette Torensjö

#### **D. Opening statements**

68. The Chair opened the session on 1 May, made the opening remarks and summarized the main tasks ahead. The Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development also made a statement on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

#### **E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work**

69. At its 1st meeting, on 1 May, the Group of Experts adopted its provisional agenda ([GEGN.2/2023/1](#)), as orally revised:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Organizational matters:
  - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
  - (b) Organization of work;
  - (c) Credentials of observers.
3. Reports of the Chair and the Secretariat.
4. Reports:
  - (a) Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names;
  - (b) Divisions of the Group of Experts;
  - (c) Activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa;
  - (d) National and international meetings and conferences.
5. Cooperation and liaison with other organizations:
  - (a) International organizations;
  - (b) Economic Commission for Africa;
  - (c) Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.
6. National and international standardization of geographical names:
  - (a) Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation;
  - (b) Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use.



7. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions.
  8. Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029, and of the work of the Group of Experts.
  9. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects.
  10. Toponymic education.
  11. Toponymic terminology.
  12. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including Indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues.
  13. Exonyms.
  14. Geographical names data management.
  15. Writing systems and pronunciation.
  16. Other geographical names issues.
  17. Presentation and adoption of decisions.
  18. Adoption of the report on the 2023 session.
  19. Arrangements for the 2025 session of the Group of Experts.
  20. Election of officers for the two subsequent sessions.
  21. Other business.
  22. Closing of the session.
70. At the same meeting, the Group of Experts approved its organization of work (GEGN.2/2023/2/Rev.2), as orally revised.
71. Also at the same meeting, the Group of Experts invited the following intergovernmental organizations and other entities to participate in the work of the session as observers: Esri; Google; Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe; International Cartographic Association; International Council of Onomastic Sciences; International Geographical Union; International Hydrographic Organization; Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers; Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography; Mapbox; Pan-American Institute of Geography and History; Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research; Société savante algérienne d’onomastique; Universidad Nacional Federico Villareal; and University of Latvia.

## F. Documentation

72. The documents before the Group of Experts at its 2023 session are available on the website of the Statistics Division, at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/3rd\\_session\\_2023/#documents](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/3rd_session_2023/#documents).

## Annex

### **List of geographical and linguistic divisions**

Africa Central Division  
Africa East Division  
Africa South Division  
Africa West Division  
Arabic Division  
Asia East Division (other than China)  
Asia South-East Division  
Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)  
Baltic Division  
Celtic Division  
China Division  
Dutch- and German-speaking Division  
East Central and South-East Europe Division  
Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division  
East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic)  
French-speaking Division  
India Division  
Latin America Division  
Norden Division  
Pacific South-West Division  
Portuguese-speaking Division  
Romano-Hellenic Division  
United Kingdom Division  
United States of America/Canada Division

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