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English

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

2023 session

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**Reports: Government on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**

**Achievements of The National Committee on Geographical Names
in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Submitted by Saudi Arabia **

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** Prepared by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pays great attention to geographical names, as geographical names are considered one of the main components of geospatial information that supports and enables many different sectors. In view of the multiplicity of government agencies concerned with place names in the Kingdom, in addition to the presence of a number of researchers and those interested in geographical names, it was important to unite the efforts between these agencies, ministries, and other relevant agencies.

Accordingly, the National Committee on Geographical Names was established in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information assumes the tasks of supervising the National Committee for Geographical Names by virtue of specialization and shall regulate the sector of the survey, geospatial information, and imaging in the Kingdom. Where this committee aims to unify efforts related to geographical names in the Kingdom in terms of writing, control, spelling, and everything related to the national standard for it, and preparing its database.

The National Committee for Geographical Names includes in its membership 21 government agencies, responsible for standardizing geographical names in the Kingdom, collecting and publishing geographical names, preparing a database for them, and preparing a national index dictionary. The National Committee for Geographical Names represents the Kingdom in local and international conferences and meetings regarding geographical names.

The National Committee for Geographical Names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to strengthen its relations with international organizations, committees, and technical teams to ensure the achievement of common strategic goals, which in turn are reflected in the achievement of sustainable development goals. The report will include the actions taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the matter of standardizing geographical names and the actions taken to support the implementation of the strategic plan of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the work program 2021-2029.

1.2 Purpose

The report's purpose is to present the National Committee on Geographical Names of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) at the UNGEGN conference 2023. We are keen on sharing the objectives, member details, along with its

achievements for the period of 2021 to 2023. We are open to feedback on the activities of the committee and also happy if the report helps any attendees at the conference to establish or improve the national committee of geographical names of their respective countries.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMITTEE

The following are the key objectives of the National Committee on geographical names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

1. Collect and publish geographical names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, carry out related work, and prepare a database for the names.
2. Prepare an indexed national dictionary that includes Romanization to be a binding reference for all government agencies and follow up on updating it
3. Coordinate and cooperate with government agencies related to geographical names to unify efforts.
4. Represent the Kingdom internally and externally regarding geographical names.
5. Ensure international cooperation and participation in preparing the International Geographical names Index Dictionary.

3. MEMBERS

The following table shows the details of members of the National Committee on Geographical names.

SN	Organization	Membership type
1	President of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information	Chairman
2	Saudi Geographical Society	Member
3	Ministry of Interior	Member
4	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Member
5	Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and, Housing	Member
6	Ministry of Energy	Member
7	General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information	Member
8	Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources	Member
9	Ministry of Transport and Logistics	Member
10	Ministry of education	Member
11	Ministry of Culture	Member
12	Ministry of Information	Member
13	Ministry of Tourism	Member
14	Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture	Member
15	Presidency of State Security	Member
16	General Administration of Military Survey	Member
17	Saudi Geological Survey Authority	Member
18	General Authority for Statistics	Member

19	King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology	Member
20	National Center for Documents and Archives	Member
21	Saudi Post Corporation	Member
22	King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives	Member

NB: The Secretary of the Committee on Geographical Names was appointed by the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information.

4. EXECUTIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

An executive sub-committee was created under the National committee to expedite the projects and activities of the committee and achieve the goals easily. The Vice-Chairman of the National Committee was appointed as the Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

Following are the objectives of the Executive sub-committee

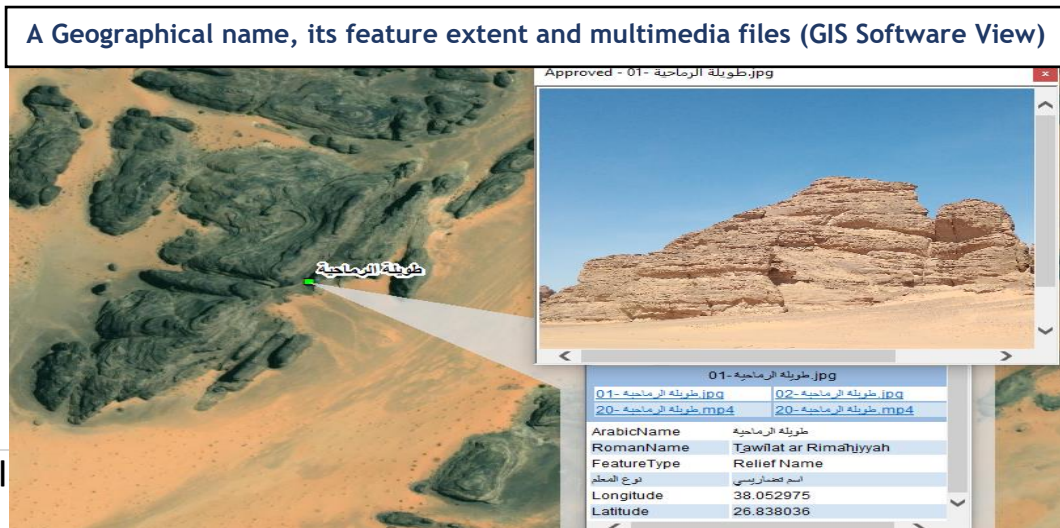
- 1- Following up on the decisions approved by the National Committee for Geographical Names.
- 2- Provide a scientific vision of what is presented to it in terms of geographical names.
- 3 - Monitors its recommendations in minutes signed by the members and submits its recommendations to the Chairman of the Committee.
- 4- Studying the work referred to it by the Chairman of the National Committee for Geographical Names.

5. THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GENERAL AUTHORITY FOR SURVEY AND GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION (GEOSA) IN THE FIELD OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Activities initiated by the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information and decisions made by it under the supervision of the National Committee on Geographical Names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were instrumental in improving the collection and documentation of the geographical names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The National committee on Geographical names oversaw and guided all the important geographical name-related projects and activities in GEOSA. The following sub-sections deal with the significant achievements of GEOSA and the National Committee in the field of geographical names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the period of 2021-2023.

5.1 Geographical Names Collection Project of the KSA on 1:25000 Scale

The geographical names collection project of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was a major project carried out under the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA) and the objective was to collect geographical names from the whole mainland area of the kingdom. As part of the project, about 140,000 names were collected and added to the database. Feature extents and multimedia files such as voice for pronunciation and pictures of features were also collected during the survey. Subsequently, roman transliteration was performed for all collected names.



5.2 The project of the Islands of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Island project was a significant achievement of the national committee . The Project was carried out by the surveyors of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA). In this project, surveyors collected island names from the both the Red Sea and the Arabian gulf of the Kingdom’s territory. Geographical names of the hydro features were also collected along with their multimedia files. 1129 island names and another 2300 names for hydro features and geographical features in islands were collected during the project.

- جزيرة شعرة الكبير .jpg

Island name and multimedia files with satellite image background

Feature	ISL
المعلم	ISL
ArabicName	جزيرة شعرة الكبير
RomanName	Jazirat Sha'rah Al Kabir
FeatureType	Relief Name
نوع المعلم	اسم تضاريسي
Longitude	42.064253
Latitude	16.838231
GLOBALID	{6B6B9AC8-7238-49E4-9B2B-7F2A7090CE48}

Island books were prepared for Red Sea Islands and Arabian Gulf Islands

One of the pages from the Red Sea Island Book

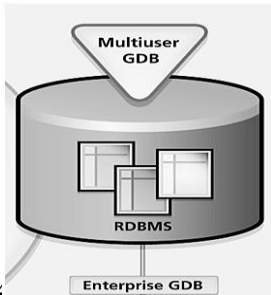
اسم الجزيرة	الارتفاع	الطول	عرض	المساحة (م2)	المساحة (كم2)	الرمز
Jazirat Ash Shi'bayn	10	42.064253	16.838231	10000	0.01	955

المملكة العربية السعودية
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
جزيرة الشيبان
Jazirat Ash Shi'bayn

المساحة: 1:20,000

5.3 Management and Update of Geographical Names Database.

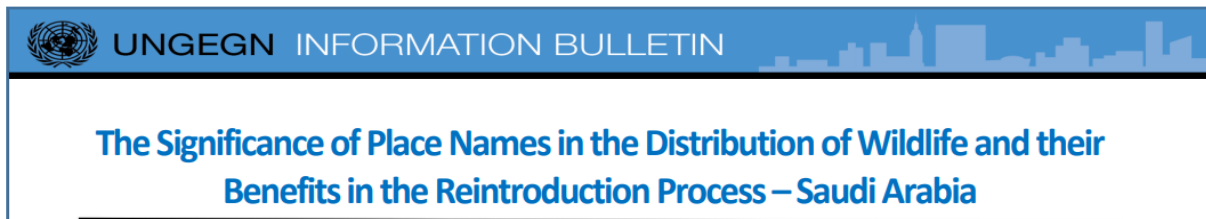
The Geographical Names Database was developed and maintained by the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA). The database was created in accordance with National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) standards. Since the geographical name database is an enterprise geodatabase it provides high performance and support for large GIS datasets along with multi-user editing. The geographical Names database stores all the information of a Geographical Name, such as Roman Name, Classification details, Alternative names, coordinates of the features, Administrative area info, Pictures of the features, Voice files for the pronunciation, etc. The geographical names database also stores feature extents of a geographical name as a polygon and a line, and linking them with the Geoname point using a unique ID. Geographical names are represented as a point feature class, and the name extents are shown with a polygon and a line feature class.



The Geographical names department in GEOSA manages and updates the Geographical Names Database regularly by integrating geographical names collected in various geographical name projects. There are about 140,000 geographical names in the geographical names database. Geographical Names Database schema is periodically reviewed and updated in alignment with modern data management methodologies and international best practices.

5.4 Participation in International Magazine

- Participation of Prof. Dr. Abdullah Nasser Alwelaie, Vice-Chairman of the National Committee on Geographical Names, with an article entitled "The Significance of Place Names in the Distribution of Wildlife and their Benefits in the Reintroduction Process –Saudi Arabia" in the Information Bulletin of UNGEGN, No 63, titled "Geographical Names as Indicators of the Environment" of June 2022.



- Participation of Eng. Khalid Abdulrahman Aldokhayel, representative of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information, and the National Committee on Geographical Names, with an article entitled " Making Geographical Names Data Accessible in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" in the Information Bulletin of UNGEGN, No 64, titled " Making Geographical Names Data Accessible" of November 2022.



5.5 Participation in an international conference

Members of the National Committee on Geographical Names actively participated in the Conference of Arab Experts on Geographical Names, which was held during the period between 5/12/2022 and 7/12/2022 in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, titled “Geographical Integration between Name and Location,” the “Importance and Impact” by presenting following topics:

- 1- Visions and proposals to develop the work of the Arab Division of Experts on Geographical Names
- 2- The role and activities of the National Committee on Geographical Names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 3- Collection and documentation of geographical names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 4- Documenting geographical names that are along the sides of the road between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman.
- 5- The role of the geospatial service system in disseminating geographical names in urban areas.

One representative of the National Committee on Geographical Names in the Kingdom of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information was elected as a member of the Geographical Names Data Management Committee, and another representative was elected as a member of the Romanization Systems Committee during the conference.

The role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this meeting of the Arab Division was confirmed in establishing sub-committees for the Arab Division, proposing a road map for developing the work of the Arab Division, the Kingdom’s membership of two committees, as well as contributing to the development of various activities out of faith and appreciation from the Kingdom through its pioneering role in all international forums.

5.6 Training Program

About 150 trainees from various universities and government agencies in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia were trained on geographical name collection and documentation processes in different training programs provided by the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information.

6. THE FUTURE

The following are some of the future plans and initiatives of the committee.

1. The geographical names database schema will be modified by adding new details to benefit a wide range of users. The schema will have new fields and added domain values to accommodate more information.
2. The geographical names database will be linked to other government organizations in the KSA, such as the Ministry of Transport, the General Authority for Statistics, the Saudi Post, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, etc. Therefore, a unified database will contain the geographical names of different organizations managed by GEOSA.
3. Development of a brilliant geographical name search engine. The search engine/portal will be called Geographical Names Information System (GNIS). This geographical name portal will help thousands of users to explore geographical names in the kingdom.
4. Development of an automated Romanization tool that will convert voice files in Arabic to the Roman script.
5. Glossary of geographical names: It will contain definitions and explanations of names and it will be a comprehensive encyclopedia of geographical names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.