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

**2023 session**

New York, 1 – 5 May 2023

**Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda \***

**Cooperation and liaison with other organizations: International Organizations**

**Report of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research**

Submitted by Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information \*\*

**Summary:**

Following the report summary submitted by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) for the 2nd Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (GEGN.2/2021/95), SCAR formally adopted and published the International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names in October of 2021. The publication of these Principles and Procedures was the result of extensive work and coordination by the SCAR Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information's Working Group on Antarctic Names. The Principles and Procedures support standard, consistent and accurate place-naming practices for national naming authorities in the Antarctic.

The SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica (CGA) continues to be a valuable relational database and web application allowing users to search the database and retrieve Antarctic names. The SCAR Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information held its annual meeting in October of 2022 which highlighted both the publication of the International Principle and Procedures on Antarctic Place Names, the continued importance of the SCAR CGA, and other related items.

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\* GEGN.2/2023/1

\*\* Prepared by Cole Kelleher, Member of the Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information

## Report of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

### 1 International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names

In October of 2021 SCAR formally adopted and published the [International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names](#). The publication of these Principles and Procedures was the result of extensive work and coordination by the SCAR Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information's Working Group on Antarctic Names. The Working Group includes representatives from Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. An Antarctic Place Name Proposal Form and an Antarctic Place Name Reference List by Nation document were also developed to compliment the International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names and assist in the procedure for naming an Antarctic feature.

Antarctic place names are important for identification, orientation, positioning and navigation, providing an essential reference system for logistical operations (including search and rescue measures), management, environmental investigation and protection, scientific research, culture, tourism, and preservation of heritage. They facilitate the exchange of information in the field, in scientific publications and in administrative measures of the Antarctic Treaty System. Place names also reflect the history of exploration of the continent.

Principles and procedures for using existing names and for proposing new names and changes have not been previously established internationally. Traditionally, each country has established its own principles and policies, which has resulted, in many cases, in the multiple naming of features, the translation or mistranslation of place names, and ambiguity and confusion in the current use of names in Antarctica.

In 1992, the Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica was compiled to provide a central storage of all existing place names of Antarctica. A set of guidelines to be followed both when selecting an existing name for a feature and when proposing new names or changes to existing names was also developed, and a draft version was distributed in 1994. The International Principles and Procedures builds on those guidelines.

Antarctica has no single naming authority so individual countries are responsible for their national policy on, and authorisation and use of, Antarctic names. This document provides signatories to the Antarctic Treaty with clear principles and procedures for the use of existing names for features in Antarctica (south of 60°S) and for the application of new names for previously unnamed features on maps, in scientific publications, and in databases.

The International Principles and Procedures acknowledges past multiple naming practices and sets out clear guidance on future practice that discourages more than one name for one feature. SCAR, through its recommendations, hopes that the present effort will contribute to the adoption of 'one name per feature' by all Antarctic place-naming authorities to promote standardization, minimize ambiguity and avoid confusion.

SCAR Report 41 - International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names:  
<https://www.scar.org/scar-library/reports-and-bulletins/scar-reports/5729-scar-report-41/>

SCAGI Antarctic Place Name Proposal Form:  
<https://www.scar.org/library/products/scagi/5728-place-name-proposal/>

SCAGI Antarctic Place Names Reference List:  
<https://www.scar.org/library/products/scagi/5727-place-names-ref-list/>

## **2 Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica**

The [SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica \(CGA\)](#) has been compiled over a period of 31 years (commenced 1992) and now consists of 39,142 names that correspond to 20,125 geographic features. The place names information has been submitted by the national names committees from 22 countries and compiled by Roberto Cervellati and Chiara Ramorino from the Italian Antarctic names committee - Comitato per i nomi geografici antartici.

The SCAR CGA is now a relational database - related to the SCAR Map catalogue, SCAR Feature Catalogue and the SCAR Flora and Fauna databases (all developed by the Australian Antarctic Data Centre). This allows the search for Antarctic names, maps and flora and fauna information to be addressed via the gazetteer or map catalogue with results showing links to national names committees, map publishers, map retailers and small scale maps showing the distribution of flora and fauna. Making the SCAR CGA a relational database discoverable promotes the discovery and awareness of what place names are in use and which naming authorities have accepted them.

## **3 SCAR Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information**

In October 2022, the Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information (SCAGI) convened for its annual meeting (virtually), which covered national reports, the Standing Committee's products and tools, website updates, a horizon scan, and action items. The SCAGI Working Group on Antarctic Place Names highlighted the SCAGI report International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names, which was successfully published by SCAR in October 2021. The next SCAGI meeting is intended to be held in mid-2023.

### **Points for discussion**

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Take note of the publication of the International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Names and the effort made to encourage international standardization of Antarctic geographic names.
- (2) Discuss or comment on the principles and procedures of standardization included in the International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Names.
- (3) Encourage SCAR member nations to reference the International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Names when naming geographic features in the Antarctic and contribute named geographic features to the SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica.