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English

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

**2023 session**

New York, 1 – 5 May 2023

Item 12 of the provisional agenda \*

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

**Report from the convenor of the Working Group on  
Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage**

Submitted by the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural  
Heritage\*\*

Summary:

The full report provides information on the activities undertaken by the  
Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage since May 2021.

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\* GEGN.2/2023/1

\*\* Prepared by Annette Torensjö and Leila Mattfolk, Sweden

## **The Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage**

The Working Group (WG) was established to address Resolution 1 of the Eight Conference (Berlin, 2002) as *Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Place Names*, with the aim to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as means of cultural retention/revitalization. The name of the WG was changed to the *Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage* at a side meeting at the 27th Session in New York 2012.

The aim of the WG is to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names, as well as to stress the importance of names as cultural heritage. Among the most important topics for the WG are geographical names used by minorities, the legislation and policies that are applicable to geographical names as cultural heritage, and the promotion of fieldwork and of the registration of names.

### **Organization**

Convenor: Ms Annette Torensjö

Rapporteur: Ms Leila Mattfolk

### **Organization of work**

The formal work within the WG is organized through meetings in connection with the sessions and on other occasions, preferably as joint meetings with other working groups, divisions, or other groups of interest. Because of the wide range of aspects, the more practical tasks within the working group are to be organized through different focus groups. The focus groups are decided on in the UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of work 2021–2029, and are the following:

1. Geographical names in relation to minorities and indigenous peoples
2. Legislation, policies & best practices relating to geographical names
3. Commercial and commemorative naming, including urban naming
4. Crowd-sourcing for collecting stories behind the names
5. The names of unwritten languages
6. Naming within tourism and branding

The outcome of the work of the focus groups will be published on the Working group's pages on UNGEGN's website. For future UNGEGN meetings the WG would welcome a brief report from each focus group on their work in the report of the Working group on geographical names as cultural heritage.

### **Working Group activities since 2021**

WG meeting at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was held on-line on May 6, 2021. (The Minutes of the meeting are published on the website [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working\\_groups/wg9.cshhtml](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wg9.cshhtml).) At the meeting Canada was appointed to lead focus group 1, *Geographical names in relation to minorities and indigenous peoples*. Carla Jack of Canada has since conceptualized the focus group, and reached out to interested Member States. The first official meeting will be held as a side event during the 2023 UNGEGN session (see working paper GEGN.2/2023/82). Norway was at the WG meeting asked to lead focus group 2, *Legislation, policies & best practices relation to geographical names*. The leading role has since been shared with Sweden.

### **Work plan**

- The Working Group will get the focus groups running in order to be able to allocate tasks to the different experts within the WG.
- The WG's website (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/wg10.html>) contains documents prepared by the WG, as well as examples of good naming practices. The convenor of the WG invites experts to contribute further examples of good practices for the purpose of updating the website with more guidelines available.
- The Working Group will promote and support the national work to consolidate good practices for Geographical Names.
- The Working Group will organize meetings, workshops, digital seminars, or the like, in order to focus on topics of special interest for the members of the Working Group, and will arrange joint meetings with other Working Groups within the UNGEGN in order to strengthen the work with Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage.