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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 6 (b) of the provisional agenda \***

**National and international standardization of geographical  
names: toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for  
international use**

**Report of the Coordinator for toponymic guidelines**

Submitted by the Coordinator for toponymic guidelines\*\*

Summary:

The full report provides a review of the aims and intentions of the toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use, drawn up by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, and highlights major activities undertaken since the 2021 session of the Group of Experts. The report provides links to documents concerning toponymic guidelines. This easily accessible information should invite and encourage countries that have not yet published toponymic guidelines to do so.

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\* GEGN.2/2023/1

\*\* Prepared by Jasper Hogerwerf, Coordinator for toponymic guidelines

## Report of the Coordinator for toponymic guidelines

### Introduction

In 1982, the United Nations recommended that countries should be encouraged to publish and keep up-to-date Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors. The aim was to enable cartographers of other countries to correctly treat all problems of cartographic toponymy of the countries that produced such guidelines. A sample prepared by former UNGEGN chair Josef Breu and submitted by Austria to the Eighth Session of UNGEGN in 1979 served as the basis for the guidelines. This format has been updated and enriched over the years.

Toponymic guidelines include information about official, national and minority languages, names authorities, source material for toponyms, glossaries, abbreviations used on official maps and administrative division.

More information on Toponymic guidelines, including the template that can be used for new documents, is available on the UNGEGN website in the Toponymic guidelines section: [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working\\_groups/wgGuidelines/](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/working_groups/wgGuidelines/)

### Updated and new Toponymic guidelines

In the 2021-2023 period new or updated Toponymic guidelines were presented by the following countries:

- **Finland:** Version 4.12. Sections on languages and administrative divisions were updated. <http://www.kotus.fi/toponymicguidelines>
- **Sweden:** 4th edition. Changes in the information on languages and map production.
- **United Kingdom:** Toponymic guidelines were updated with administrative changes. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/toponymic-guidelines>

### Availability and dissemination

Currently, there are 41 countries with Toponymic guidelines. Previously, not all these Toponymic guidelines were easily accessible. Some could only be found under the documents of earlier conferences (UNCSGN) or sessions (UNGEKN), while others were not published online. In the past 2 years all Toponymic guidelines have been listed and made available through the UNGEGN website: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/naa/toponymic/> The links are monitored and updated regularly. Notifications from member states to the UNGEGN secretariat about changes in local web links to Toponymic guidelines are welcomed.

### Promotion

Toponymic guidelines contain essential information for map makers and all other editors dealing with geographical names. Therefore it is important that more countries make Toponymic guidelines available, and that existing documents remain up to date. UNGEGN encourages countries to prepare Toponymic guidelines if they have not done so, and to check and update already available Toponymic guidelines if necessary.

In UNGEGN Information Bulletin no. 63 of June 2022 an article was published describing how Toponymic guidelines support the dissemination of standardized geographical names: [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEKN\\_bulletin\\_no.\\_63\\_22Jun.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEKN_bulletin_no._63_22Jun.pdf) (page 32-33).

### **Invitation**

All delegations are invited and encouraged to prepare or update Toponymic guidelines for their country. Please know that it is not strictly mandatory to use the template for Toponymic guidelines on the UNGEGN website.

Nowadays part of the information present in many Toponymic guidelines can also be found on the internet. This may be helpful by preparing new Toponymic guidelines, as long as the information is checked and verified. As there are many unreliable sources and even well-known websites and applications do not always use the official geographical names as standardized by the responsible national or regional authorities, Toponymic guidelines remain essential in providing reliable information on national geographical names to map makers and other editors.

For any questions or further information related to Toponymic guidelines, please feel free to contact the Coordinator.