

21 February 2023

Original: English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names****2023 session**

New York, 1–5 May 2023

Item 11 of the provisional agenda\*

**Toponymic terminology****Anthology of geographical terms for natural and human  
features in Saudi Arabia****Summary\*\***

Since ancient times, natural phenomena and landmarks (such as mountain heights, seas of sand, streams and water bodies) and human landmarks (such as population centres and water resources) have served as signs and flags to guide people and have played an important role in the process of communication between people. In the modern era, interest has increased with regard to documenting and classifying the names of places and landmarks and determining their locations in dictionaries and maps. Place names are an essential element of a map, and Saudi Arabia was one of the pioneering countries in this field. Saudi Arabia spans a vast area, which includes various geographical environments, such as natural and human features and manifestations that differ from one region to another, according to location and surface topography.

The names of places and landmarks in Saudi Arabia carry various descriptions and geographical terms. Some of the terms have more than one meaning since the descriptions of some differ from one region to another, which requires that they be defined. Taking into account the role of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information in serving relevant government agencies and various segments of society by providing and documenting modern geographical information, the idea came about to produce a publication that would introduce these terms and be a guide and reference for authorities, researchers and others interested in this field.

The book, an anthology of geographical terms for natural and human features in Saudi Arabia, contains the most widespread and often-used natural and human geographical terms, providing descriptions of places and landmarks throughout the various regions of Saudi Arabia, including modern terms that are not found in dictionaries. The terms are substantiated by photographs depicting the terms

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\* [GEGN.2/2023/1](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gegn/sessions/3rd_session_2023/).

\*\* The full report was prepared by the Vice Chairman of the National Committee for Geographical Names, General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information, Abdullah Alwelaie. It will be available under document symbol GEGN.2/2023/88/CRP.88, in the language of submission only, at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gegn/sessions/3rd\\_session\\_2023/](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gegn/sessions/3rd_session_2023/).



associated with the names of landmarks in the different regions and indicating the coordinates of their locations.

The book contains the geographical terms in the geographical names database that the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information is currently producing and covers all the regions of Saudi Arabia, in addition to what was included in earlier topographic maps that had been produced by other government agencies, as well as old and modern references. It also contains some geological and marine-related terms to ensure that it is as comprehensive as possible.

The geographical terms in the book have been divided into major categories (mountains, deserts, watercourses, watersheds, water resources, residential, marine, roads, depressions, levels, antiquities, plants, etc.), under which there is a large group of homogeneous terms and derivatives from the different regions of Saudi Arabia.

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