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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 4b of the provisional agenda \***

**Reports of Divisions of the Group of Experts**

**Report of the Portuguese-speaking Division**

**Submitted by Brazil \*\***

**Summary:**

Created in 2007, the Portuguese-speaking Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was practically inactive until July 2020, when it was reactivated at the initiative of Brazil and Mozambique. Since then, it has managed to bring together five of the nine Portuguese-speaking countries, hold quarterly online meetings, publish the Division's website and develop rules of procedure and a workplan that primarily aims at exchanging information, training and raising the awareness of its member countries in relation to the subject of geographical names. The Division has also provided mutual support among its member countries for the national standardization of geographical names.

The full report will further describe the Division's workplan and present an overview of the website, as well as discuss its greatest challenges and the ideas the Division intends to put into practice to address them.

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## Report of the Portuguese-speaking Division

In July 2021, following the 2nd Session of UNGEGN, Brazil and Mozambique took the initiative of reactivating the Portuguese-speaking Division, which had been created in 2007 and had not thrived. The two countries held meetings and, with the help of the UNGEGN Secretariat, managed to contact three other Portuguese-speaking countries, which joined the Division: Cabo Verde, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste. Therefore, at present, five of the nine Portuguese-speaking countries actually participate in the Division.

Thus, for a start, the group, which holds quarterly meetings, has been working on structuring itself as a Division. Having established its Rules of Procedure, the group has organized the work, in the form of a Work Plan; created its own website, facilitating access to the group's work; and is promoting mutual knowledge among the participating countries of the reality of the work with geographical names in each one of them and is still seeking contact with the other five Portuguese-speaking countries, aiming at their incorporation to the Division.

The Work Plan 2021-2030 seeks to adhere to the UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029 and is divided into 3 phases: the first, currently in its final stage, involves the development of the division's Rules of Procedure, the creation of a website (<https://dplpng.ibge.gov.br/>) and the collection and organization of information about the Member Countries and their representatives, as well as the dissemination of basic official information about the geographic names of the Member Countries, organizing them on the website. Also, in order to level up the knowledge of the Member Countries about the resolutions and good practices disseminated by the Group of Experts, it was recommended that all representatives of the countries should read the Portuguese version of *The UNSCN Resolutions 1967-2017* prepared by Brazil in 2014 and the *Manual for National Standardization of Geographical Names*, both available on the UNGEGN website.

Finally, winding up the first phase of the Plan, each country must make a presentation on the management of its geographical names.

In the second phase, the Division intends to deal with improving the toponymic education of the teams that work with geographical names in its Member Countries and to leverage the standardization of geographical names in the countries, while seeking to improve the dissemination of official toponymic data of the countries, through the website of the Division and other means. To this end, the translation of the *Toponymy Training Manual* is planned, as well as the preparation of a common dictionary of terms related to geographical names used in UNGEGN texts, in order to standardize future translations. The Division expects to enable the publication, both on the Division's and on the UNGEGN's website, of the Portuguese versions of the cited manual, of the *Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Names* and of all UNGEGN publications translated into Portuguese so far.

Other projects for this second phase are envisaged. One of them is the preparation of a comparative glossary of generic terms of the Portuguese language as used in the different Member Countries, followed by the elaboration of Toponymic Guidelines by each Member Country, which would then be presented to the group for suggestions of improvements. Additionally, a Seminar on National Authorities is also expected to take place in this second phase of the Work Plan - it will involve the exchange of experiences and the development of strategies to enable the creation of a Names Authority in Member Countries where it does not yet exist.

The third phase focuses on the continuation of the efforts to leverage the standardization of geographical names in the Member Countries. Based on the information contained in the reports of the countries on the management of their geographic names, the Division intends to develop, as a group, projects that can be carried out jointly or in individual countries, aiming at the advance of the standardization of geographical names in accordance with the objectives of The 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development. Some projects already suggested involve promoting the valorization of toponyms, especially among schools and the general public and the attempt to establish a Toponymy discipline in university courses related to this area of knowledge (Letters, Geography, Cartography, etc.). The establishment of links with universities and Onomastics societies will be intensely sought after.

Considered an important tool for the work of the Portuguese-speaking Division, the Division's website can be accessed at <https://dplpng.ibge.gov.br/>. It contains the contacts of the representatives of the countries participating in the Division, organized by country; basic information about these countries; the contacts of their Names Authorities, when available; the Work Plan; the dates and accounts of Division meetings, as well as links to some events of interest. The page also brings the *Glossary of Generic Terms of Geographical Names used in the Systematic Mapping of Brazil, in scales 1:1,000,000 and 1:250,000*, as well as the List of Cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants in Brazil. It is also possible to look up the geographical names of the main administrative regions of Brazil, Cabo Verde and Mozambique. Documents of interest are also published, translated into Portuguese, such as the *Glossary of Terminologies in UN Languages, The UNSCN Resolutions 1967-2017* and the *UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work – 2021 to 2029*, translated by Brazil.

Despite the success of several initiatives, in the last six months the Division has been facing difficulties in contacting some members, with their consequent withdrawal of the divisional activities. In order to try to stimulate the continuity of the participation of the countries, the organization of a seminar within the scope of the Division is being considered. The event would be open to the participation of the various institutions that work with geographical names in each Member Country. The theme of the event will be defined according to the presentations of the countries on their management of national geographic names. As a special factor to encourage participation in the seminar, it would be desirable to have one or more UNGEGN experts as guest speaker(s).

The Portuguese-speaking Division welcomes suggestions for other strategies from other divisions and specialists.