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United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

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Item 13 of the provisional agenda*

Exonyms

Territorial divisions of the countries of the world

Summary**

The National Committee on Toponymy of France was asked by the National Library of France to participate, for four years (from the beginning of 2019 to the end of 2022), in the redesign of its document indexing system, through the working group on “places” (another working group was focused on “local authorities”, and thus, in particular, the political or administrative institutions linked to those places).

In the course of this work, the Committee was asked in 2021 to produce a French version of the list of subdivisions¹ established by the United Nations in the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE).²

However, the French list is different in two respects:

- First, in terms of the languages, inasmuch as it appears that UN/LOCODE mentions only one of the endonyms in the section containing specific names, while the section containing generic names is in English. The Committee’s table therefore includes the French exonyms, and it was confirmed during the Committee’s work that these accounted for only a small proportion of all the names in the divisions in question, and the French generic names;
- Second, the Committee has sometimes reached a different conclusion from the United Nations regarding levels of division or subdivision, mainly to take into account the criterion of stability over time. In Germany and Czechia, one subdivision level is taken into account in addition to the main division level. In Estonia and Iceland, reforms that elevated municipalities to the first level are

* GEGN.2/2023/1.

** The full report was prepared by Pierre Jaillard (France). It will be available under document symbol GEGN.2/2023/89/CRP.89, in the language of submission only, at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/3rd_session_2023/.

¹ See <https://service.unece.org/trade/locode/2022-2%20SubdivisionCodes.htm>.

² See <https://unece.org/trade/cefact/unlocode-code-list-country-and-territory>.



taken into account; in Madagascar, the provinces have been considered to be only historical since 2009 and the 22 regions have been identified as first-level divisions. In contrast, the Committee and UN/LOCODE have identified the same two levels of division and subdivision in Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Dominican Republic, France, Guinea, Hungary, Malawi, Malta, Morocco, the Philippines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Spain, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Tables are available online; for each country they indicate:

- First, the specific name of each of the territorial divisions or subdivisions identified;³
- Second, the generic name or names of the territorial divisions or subdivisions identified.⁴

³ See http://cnig.ign.fr/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Divisions-territoriales-du-monde_CNT-CNIG_10-d%C3%A9cembre-20211.pdf.

⁴ See http://cnig.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/tableau_plus_hautes_subdivisions_administratives_cnt.pdf.