

# Guidelines for geographical names as cultural heritage

Forum on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage:  
The Revitalization of the Working Group

**CHOO Sungjae and YOON Jihwan**

**Republic of Korea**

**Apr 29, 2025**



**United Nations Group of Experts  
on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)**

# Why Place Names Matter

- Carriers of **cultural identities** and **belongingness**
- Vital elements of intangible cultural heritage



AI-generated image



# Why We Need Guidelines

- Evolving focus since 1992 UNCSCGN
  - From indigenous and minority names
  - To historical names, resilience, and cultural significance
- Urgent Needs
  - Threats from urbanization and modernization
  - Need for cultural sensitivity and regional integration



# Structure of the Guidelines

- 5 main sections
  - Concept of geographical names and standardization
  - Concept of cultural heritage
  - Role of geographical names as cultural heritage
  - Evaluation criteria (historical, common usage, socio-cultural impact)
  - Integration into standardization processes



# Key Evaluation Criteria

- **Historical significance:** verifiability and continuity
- **Common usage:** resilience and historical evidence
- **Socio-cultural impact:**
  - local identity
  - cultural uniqueness
  - diverse place images (placeness)
  - community belongingness



# Contribution to UNGEGN Mission and SDGs

- Aligns with UNGEGN Strategic Plan (inclusiveness, cultural sensitivity, sustainability)
- Supports SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Inclusive Societies)
- Strengthens sustainable spatial information management



# Application and Discussion

- Aligns with existing standardization manual
  - Priority to locally used, historically meaningful names
- Proposed standardized format for name proposals
- Future directions:
  - Worldwide application
  - International cooperation and best practices

