

10 March 2025

English

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

2025 session

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 7(a) of the provisional agenda *

**Effective work programmes: Measures taken and proposed
for the implementation of resolutions and recommendations**

**Implementation by New Zealand of relevant resolutions,
recommendations and strategic intentions**

Submitted by New Zealand **

Summary

This report pertains to the implementation by New Zealand of relevant resolutions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. It provides information on some of the country's own strategic intentions of the Group of Experts.

In the report, the New Zealand national naming authority, summarizes its effective work programmes and measures taken to give effect to relevant resolutions, recommendations and strategic intentions, offering evidence-based examples that contribute to attaining relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

* GEGN.2/2025/1

** Prepared by Wendy Shaw, Secretary for the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa.

Past reports from New Zealand

The identification and implementation of many past UNGEGN resolutions continues to be an ongoing priority for New Zealand. One of the many examples is Resolution I/4(E)(1) which requires that each names authority produce, and continually revise, appropriate gazetteers of all its standardized geographical names. See the refreshed *New Zealand Gazetteer*, which was rolled out in March 2025: <https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/> - and refer to brief details of this project in the national report of New Zealand under Agenda item 4(b).

Refer to past reports from New Zealand to UNGEGN, which identify relevant resolutions and strategic intentions, and which provide evidence/examples of their implementation:

- 2023 UNGEGN Session: *Report of New Zealand on activities aligned with the strategic plan and programme of work, 2021- 2029, of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names*¹
- 2021 UNGEGN Session: *Implementation by New Zealand of resolutions adopted at the United Nations Conferences and Sessions on the Standardization of Geographical Names*²
- 2019 UNGEGN Session: *Report on the implementation by New Zealand of resolutions adopted at the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names*³
- 2017 11th UNCSGN⁴: *Report on New Zealand's Implementation of UN Resolutions*⁵
- 2012 10th UNCSGN: *Report on the Implementation of UN Resolutions by New Zealand*⁶

2023 UNGEGN decisions relevant to New Zealand

This 2025 report identifies the most recent UNGEGN decisions agreed at its 2023 Session, which are relevant to New Zealand:

- Decision 3/2023/1(c) Report of the Chair: *Encouraged the adoption of good practices of the Group of Experts in order to advance the integration of the Strategic Plan over the next six years, such as the prioritization of work products and recording of all the strategies and actions of the Group of Experts in the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029, grounding decisions in the principles of the United Nations and further mobilization of the linguistic/geographical divisions as well as all stakeholders.*
 - ✓ While the delivery of this decision is largely managed by UNGEGN’s Vice-Chair Sungjae Choo (covered in the report he prepared under Agenda item 3(c) ‘Implementation of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names strategic plan and programme of work 2021-2029 during the period of 2023-2025’, the responsibility and execution of many actions lie with Member States. New Zealand has contributed to achieving some of the actions, noting advice given to Canada on UNGEGN’s Focus Group on Indigenous Geographical Names, and advice given to Canada towards the global survey conducted by the International

¹ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/3rd_session_2023/documents/GEGN.2_2023_33_CRP33.pdf

² https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/2nd_session_2021/documents/GEGN.2_2021_18_CRP18_7_NZ.pdf

³ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/2019-new-york-ungegn-1st-session/documents/GEGN.2_2019_34_CRP.34_Report_New_Zealand_Implementation_UN_Resolutions_FINAL.pdf

⁴ United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names

⁵ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/11th-uncsgn-docs/E_CONF.105_36_CRP.36_8_Report%20on%20New%20Zealand's%20implementation%20of%20UN%20resolutions%20-%20FORMATTED%20by%20COMMS%20-%20202017-05-29.pdf

⁶ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/10th-uncsgn-docs/econf/E_CONF.101_50_Implementation%20of%20UN%20Resolutions%20Report%20-%20New%20Zealand.pdf

Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) for its Global Action Plan⁷. The contribution by the Focus Group to IDIL addresses relevant actions from UNGEGN's Strategy 4: Culture, heritage and language recognition.

- Decision 3/2023/5(e) Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021– 2029 and of the work of the Group of Experts: *Encouraged Member States to align their standardization activities to the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021– 2029.*
 - ✓ New Zealand is actively working through relevant actions identified in UNGEGN's Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029. See examples under the heading below 'UNGEgn Strategic Plan and Programme of Work action items relevant to New Zealand'.
- Decision 3/2023/8(g) Cooperation and liaison with other international organizations: *Recognized the activities and progress that the International Hydrographic Organization had achieved in naming undersea and maritime features and encouraged national names authorities to submit proposals for undersea feature names to the International Hydrographic Organization/Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Subcommittee on Undersea Feature Names and to promote the work of undersea feature names standardization within their respective programmes of work.*
 - ✓ New Zealand has an Undersea Feature Names Committee (UFNC) to process undersea feature name proposals in the Southern Ocean and out to the limits of New Zealand's continental shelf (as agreed by UNCLOS⁸). The UFNC was established in 2010. Proposals⁹ from scientists, the public, Māori, other government agencies and internationals, can be made for undersea feature names but must meet the *New Zealand Standard*¹⁰, which is aligned to the international standard *B-6 on the Standardization of Undersea Feature Names*¹¹. See also New Zealand's *Protocol for undersea feature naming*¹². 708 (83%) of the 857 existing undersea feature names within New Zealand's jurisdiction were determined by the Board and its UFNC from a spreadsheet that NIWA¹³ provided the New Zealand Geographic Board in 2009. The international Sub Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN)¹⁴ has a member from New Zealand (but not representing New Zealand) who is also a member of New Zealand's UFNC. New Zealand has been instrumental in establishing SCUFN's cookbook¹⁵ which scientifically defines the feature geomorphology of the sea floor. The international gazetteer of undersea feature names¹⁶ has approved 274 undersea feature names from New Zealand since 2012.
- Decision 3/2023/10(b) National and international standardization of geographical names: names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation; toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use: *Encouraged experts to continue developments in naming principles*

⁷ <https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/indigenous-languages/about/action-plan>

⁸ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

⁹ <https://www.linz.govt.nz/guidance/place-naming/propose-place-name/propose-undersea-feature-name>

¹⁰ <https://www.linz.govt.nz/resources/regulatory/standard-undersea-feature-names-nzgs60000>

¹¹ https://iho.int/uploads/user/pubs/bathy/B-6_e4%20%200_2019_EF_clean_3Oct2019.pdf

¹² <https://www.linz.govt.nz/resources/guide/protocol-undersea-feature-naming-area-interest-new-zealand-geographic-board-nga-pou-taunaha-o>

¹³ National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Science

¹⁴ https://www.gebco.net/about_us/committees_and_groups/scufn/

¹⁵ <https://scufn.ops-webservices.kr/new-generic-term-and-definition/>

¹⁶ <https://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/gazetteer/>

and procedures relevant to their geographical context and report them to the Group of Experts.

- ✓ Since UNGEGN's 2023 Session, New Zealand has developed two new policies: 'Contemporary Māori geographic names policy' and 'Defining the extents or boundaries of suburb and locality names.' These are briefly covered in the National report of New Zealand under Agenda item 4(b).
- Decision 3/2023/13(c) Toponymic education: *Supported efforts to restore, empower, promote and preserve geographical names of Indigenous heritage by making them available as spatial datasets.*
 - ✓ New Zealand launched two printed Tangata Whenua Place Names maps in July 2023. Information about the digital delivery of the data for these maps is covered in the report entitled 'New Zealand's Tangata Whenua Place Names maps – challenges and lessons learned' under Agenda item 8(a). The *New Zealand Gazetteer* continues to provide for searching, navigating the spatial map and downloading the data. Māori geographical names comprise nearly half of all ~54,000 geographical names in the *Gazetteer*.
- Decision 3/2023/14(b) Toponymic terminology: *Requested Member States to continue to suggest, and the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology to address, proposals for additions, modifications and corrections to the database of toponymic terminology.*
 - ✓ While no formal contributions have been made by New Zealand in the past two years, there is an intention to request these four terms be included: dual, alternative, collected and recorded.
- Decision 3/2023/15(b) Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including Indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues: *Supported the continuation of the sharing of national experiences and engagement, especially noting the increased attention by the Group of Experts on the importance of all cultural heritage matters.*
 - ✓ New Zealand is committed to sharing national experiences and engagement particularly on the importance of all cultural heritage matters in relation to geographical names. This has been evidenced by the liaison with the Australian and Canadian naming jurisdictions/authorities. Noting that the Board has a statutory purpose, 'provide the means for appropriate recognition to be accorded to cultural and heritage values associated with geographic features'.
- Decision 3/2023/17(b) Report of the Secretariat – World Geographical Names Database: *Urged Member States to contribute to the Database to ensure that toponyms were accurately reflected across all languages, including those with non-Roman alphabets or scripts, to strengthen relationships, links and connections in geographical names standardization.*
 - ✓ New Zealand provided geographical names and audio files to the World Geographical Names Database some years ago.
- Decision 3/2023/18(d) Geographical names data management: *Encouraged Member States (i) To consider linked data in their approaches to geographical names standardization and (ii) To contribute further to the monitoring of the availability of free, easily accessible, and authorized data on digital geographical names.*
 - ✓ Accessible, easy and free geographical names data from the *New Zealand Gazetteer* have been delivered for many years. Even the code is freely available via

Github. In 2023 New Zealand contributed to an UNGEGN webinar on ‘Developing Digital Gazetteers Using Free and Open-Source Software’ in May 2022¹⁷.

UNGEEN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work actions items relevant to New Zealand

New Zealand’s report to UNGEGN’s 2023 Session identified several Aims and Actions from UNGEGN’s Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 that are relevant to New Zealand and provided evidence of having met them. In the past two years New Zealand has continued to contribute to and align with relevant Actions. This 2025 report extracts three Actions which are relevant to New Zealand and which under the heading ‘actors/responsibility’ include ‘Member States’ as having a role in meeting those Actions:

Action 2-ii-6: ‘Continue to communicate and liaise with existing groups and explore further effective ways of cooperation with: ICA, ICOS, IGU, IHO, ISO, OGC, PAIGH, SCAR (SCAGI), Unicode Consortium.’

- ✓ New Zealand has been active with SCAGI¹⁸ in relation to Antarctic geographical naming. New Zealand attended and reported to both SCAGI meetings in 2023 and 2024. A new sub-group is currently being formed by the UK to deal with all matters relating to the Antarctic Digital Database (ADD). New Zealand will join that sub-group.

Action 4-ii-5: ‘Share Member States’ treatment of geographical names in indigenous, minority and regional language groups (policies and principles, field collection methodology, naming of both cultural and physical features, etc.).’

- ✓ New Zealand’s new policy on contemporary Māori geographical names is one example.

Action 4-ii-7: ‘Encourage presentations and discussions relevant to current key cultural aspects of naming and renaming, and to naming in particular environments.’

- ✓ New Zealand has presented at webinars¹⁹ and conferences²⁰ which are also listed in the national report of New Zealand under Agenda item 4(b).

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1ToWyzd818>

¹⁸ Standing Committee of Antarctic Geographical Names

¹⁹

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SptJZkh9TY&list=PLYE56PxGCqSXGUtFlvpNn0b_SauF4Xfik&index=8&t=1999s&pp=iAQB

²⁰ <https://cartography.org.nz/geocart2024/schedule> and <https://www.nzgsconference2024.co.nz/keynote-speakers.html>

New Zealand’s Strategic Plan 2025-2030 and effective work programme and measures

See the National Report of New Zealand under Agenda item 4(b) for a brief summary under the heading ‘Strategic intentions’. The Board’s proposed 2025-2030 Strategic Plan consolidates the previous 2020-2025 strategy into just two goals: ‘Naming places’ and ‘Engagement, Education and Encouragement’ with corresponding objectives which have been categorized into the Board’s functional requirements and delivery expectations – see the [draft one-pager](#) below, scheduled for further discussion at the Board’s 31 March 2025 meeting:



Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa
New Zealand Geographic Board

Te Rautaki | Strategy 2025-2030

Ngā Pou Taunaha O Aotearoa – The memorial markers of the landscape

Te Kaupapa | Purpose statement

Our purpose is to secure and celebrate New Zealand’s unique identity through place names

Te Whakakitenga | Vision statement

We enable meaningful connections between people, places and language through these goals:

- Naming places**
We officially name features and places so that people can effectively communicate information about location and preserve New Zealand’s heritage and culture
- Engagement, Education and Encouragement**
We make information including stories about place names readily available

Ngā Whanonga Pono | Values

Three principles shape and drive how we work:

Kaitiakitanga

- we are dedicated to preserve and protect New Zealand’s cultural heritage through place names
- we fulfil our Treaty obligations in respect to partnership, protection and participation

Mana

- we acknowledge the mana of places, tangata whenua and other communities
- we will be passionate, expert and leaders in place naming

Manaakitanga

- we are open, we share, we listen and we engage positively in our relationships

Whakataukī | Proverb

‘Ko tōku tūrangawaewae ko tōku mana’ ‘Knowing my place in the world is my source of strength’

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Naming places

Our vision to name places holds us to our functions as set out in The New Zealand Geographic Board Act 2008.

What do we do?

- We officially name all relevant and appropriate places, including populated places in New Zealand, suburbs and localities, districts and regions, Antarctic features and undersea features
- We review and honour with Crown reserve names
- We assign names that reflect New Zealand’s unique culture and heritage
- We collect original Māori place names
- We ensure the official record of place names (NZ Gazetteer) is readily available, up to date, and complete

How will we do it better?

- We proactively identify existing names and assess whether they can be made official (fast-track region by region project)
- We maintain our policies and guidelines to ensure they are efficient and fit for purpose
- We maintain essential relationships with Toitū Te Whenua, the Department of Conservation and Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, and our international partners
- We contribute to, influence and implement international best practice for standardised and consistent place naming
- We make processes for place naming accessible and easy to understand especially for proposals and submissions
- We engage with Māori communities to process, encourage and restore their place names
- We provide advice through Te Arawhiti to support the cultural redress of Treaty of Waitangi Settlements
- We engage with post-settlement Treaty entities to meet our Te Kāhui Whakamana (settlement commitments)
- We take account of the impact of climate change on places and their naming

Engagement, education and encouragement

Our vision for engagement, education and encouragement holds us to our purpose of recognising New Zealand’s unique identity through place names.

What do we do?

- We engage with and encourage those publishing official documents to use place official names
- We educate communities about the significance of official place names and the naming processes followed
- We work with stakeholders including historians, communities and tangata whenua to record the stories about place names

How will we do it better?

- We investigate advancing technologies to develop the NZ Gazetteer and the Board’s online presence embracing best practice in UX design
- We use our channels to promote and share information about place names and their stories
- We provide place name information for commemorations and cultural events that contribute to our national identity
- We leverage media attention to promote the everyday use and understanding of official place names and the naming processes followed
- We react to instances where official names are not used in official documents
- We publish documents in Māori and English to reach a broader audience
- We enable correct pronunciation of official place names
- We ensure that the role of the NZGB is clearly conveyed through our work

A6888265, Version 1.0, April 2025

The main reason for simplifying the Strategic Plan is to focus on the Board’s core work and to identify practical and achievable ways to meet those core responsibilities. The updated outreach goals are the stretch part of the Strategic Plan. The Board has a companion Programme of Work managed by its Secretariat which provides progress and accountability to show that the Board is meeting its strategic intentions.

Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Take note of New Zealand’s efforts to implement relevant UNGEGN resolutions, recommendations and strategic intentions.
- (2) Consider standardizing how Member States might document and report on how they are giving effect to relevant Actions from UNGEGN’s Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029.

Contact

Wendy Shaw
Secretary/Hēkeretari
New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa
c/- Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand
155 The Terrace
PO Box 5501
Wellington 6145
New Zealand
Phone +64 4 460 0581
Mobile +64 27 4807 082
Email wshaw@linz.govt.nz