Terms of Reference (TOR) for:

UNGEGN Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy

1. Role/Purpose

The Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy (WGFTC) will provide strategic direction and leadership to ensure effective development and implementation of toponymic training worldwide. A key aspect of the Working Group's purpose is to secure and administer funding to enable experts from developing countries to participate in UNGEGN activities and to establish sustainable financial mechanisms for toponymic initiatives. The Working Group coordinates information on toponymy training courses and, where required, assists in the planning and delivery of international courses organized by a host country, UNGEGN Division or affiliated organization. Toponymic standardization represents a critical component of national and international spatial data infrastructures, requiring coordinated educational approaches to ensure consistency. The preservation and proper documentation of geographical names serve as vital cultural heritage assets that connect communities to their histories and identities. Through facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity building, this Working Group supports the United Nations' broader goals of international cooperation and sustainable development.

2. Term

This TOR is effective from 3 May 2025 and will be ongoing until terminated by agreement between the members of the working group or by decision of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). The ongoing nature of this mandate reflects the continuous evolution of toponymic practices and the need for sustained educational initiatives in this specialized field. The Working Group acknowledges that technological advancements and changing geopolitical contexts necessitate an adaptive approach to its operational framework and objectives in funding approaches and toponymic training.

3. Membership

The Working Group will, or may, comprise:
- A Convenor
- A Co-Convenor
- Representatives from UN member states with expertise in fundraising
- Representatives from UN member states with experience in toponymy and toponymic training
- Partners from academia with relevant experience in toponymic training
- Representatives from related non-government organizations

The diverse composition of this Working Group is meant to ensure representation from various geographical regions and linguistic traditions, providing a comprehensive approach to fundraising and toponymic education. Members are selected based on their demonstrated expertise in geographical names standardization, educational methodologies, and regional knowledge relevant to toponymic practices. The Working Group actively encourages participation from developing countries to promote capacity building and ensure that training initiatives address the specific challenges faced in different parts of the world.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Working Group is accountable for:

A) Funding:
- Developing strategies to secure funding for toponymic training initiatives
- Assisting in funding participation in UNGEGN sessions for experts from developing countries
- Sourcing funding for training courses in various regions, including
    o Establishing transparent budgeting procedures for all funded activities, with clear criteria and processes for the allocation of financial in accordance with UN financial regulations.
    o Creating detailed documentation and periodical audits of funding sources and expenditures for all training initiatives.
- Working towards establishing an UNGEGN trust fund to ensure sustainable financing

B) Toponymic training:
- Coordinating information on toponymy training courses globally
- Assisting in the planning and delivery of international courses organized by host countries or UNGEGN Divisions
- Developing and maintaining web-based training materials to reach a wider audience
- Fostering collaboration between toponymy experts and educational institutions
- Removing obstacles to successful delivery, adoption, and use of toponymic training
- Maintaining focus on the agreed scope, outcomes, and benefits of toponymic education
- Monitoring and managing external factors that are critical to training success

The responsibilities outlined above related to toponymic training reflect the multifaceted nature of this Working Group, encompassing theoretical knowledge, practical skills, cultural awareness dimensions, as well as fundraising. The Working Group recognizes that effective toponymic training must address both technical aspects of name standardization and the socio-cultural contexts that shape naming practices in different regions. Through its coordinating function, the Working Group serves as a global clearinghouse for best practices, educational resources, and innovative approaches to toponymic training.

The membership of the Working Group will commit to:
- Attending scheduled Working Group meetings
- Championing toponymic training within and outside their work areas
- Sharing communications and information across all Working Group members
- Making timely decisions and taking action to advance the Working Group's objectives

- Contributing to the development of training materials and courses
- As far as possible attending relevant UNGEGN sessions and conferences

Each member brings valuable expertise and regional perspectives that collectively strengthen the Working Group's capacity to develop relevant and effective training initiatives. Active participation ensures that diverse viewpoints are considered and that initiatives reflect the global nature of toponymic work while respecting regional differences in naming practices. Members serve as ambassadors for toponymic standardization within their respective organizations and countries, promoting awareness of the importance of proper geographical names management.

5. Meetings

All meetings will be chaired by the Convenor. Decisions will be made by consensus (i.e., members are satisfied with the decision even though it may not be their first choice). If consensus cannot be reached, the Convenor makes the final decision.

Meeting agendas and minutes will be provided by the Convenor or a designated Working Group member, including:
- Preparing agendas and supporting papers
- Preparing meeting notes and information

Meetings will be held at least once annually, online or in conjunction with UNGEGN sessions. Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed. If required, subgroup meetings will be arranged outside of these times at a time convenient to subgroup members.

The meeting structure acknowledges both the international composition of the Working Group and the need for regular, effective communication to advance its objectives. Virtual meeting technologies play a vital role in maintaining continuity of operations between in-person sessions, allowing for more frequent exchanges than would otherwise be possible. Documentation of meeting proceedings ensures institutional memory and accountability, providing a clear record of decisions made and actions to be taken by Working Group members.

6. Work Programme

The Working Group will focus on:
- Supporting the implementation of the UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work
- Establishing mechanisms for funding participation of experts from developing countries
- Exploring partnerships with international organizations and donor agencies
- Developing proposals for the establishment of an UNGEGN trust fund
- Maintaining and updating the Toponymy Training Manual
- Coordinating and supporting toponymy training courses offered in different regions
- Developing web-based training resources to reach a wider audience
- Organizing webinars on specific toponymic topics
- Collaborating with toponymy experts from academic institutions to develop standardized curricula
- Reporting on activities at UNGEGN sessions

The Work Programme reflects a strategic approach to toponymic education that balances traditional in-person training with innovative digital delivery methods. The Toponymy Training Manual serves as the cornerstone of educational initiatives, providing a consistent framework that can be adapted to different regional contexts and linguistic environments. Digital resources expand the reach of toponymic education beyond traditional boundaries, democratizing access to specialized knowledge that was previously available only through formal courses or academic programs.

7. Communication Strategy

The Working Group will maintain clear and effective communication channels to support its objectives:

Internal Communication:

- A digital platform for document sharing and collaborative work.
- Regular virtual meetings between full Working Group sessions.
- Dedicated communication channels for subgroups working on specific projects.

External Communication:

- Development and maintenance of the dedicated working group section on the UNGEGN website to showcase training resources and training opportunities announcements.
- Public-facing repository of training materials and resources on Working Group webpage.
- Regular updates in the UNGEGN Bulletin.
- Strategic communication with potential funding partners and academic institutions.
- Social media presence to raise awareness about the importance of toponymic standardization.

The Working Group will designate a communication coordinator responsible for implementing this strategy and ensuring consistent messaging across all platforms. All external communications will adhere to UNGEGN communication guidelines and UN visual identity standards.

8. Assessment and Evaluation

The Working Group will implement a systematic approach to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its activities. This evaluation framework includes:

- Development of key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the impact of toponymic training initiatives
- Review surveys of training courses, measuring participant satisfaction, knowledge transfer, and practical application
- Assessment of the geographical and institutional reach of training initiatives to ensure equitable distribution of resources
- Studies tracking the implementation of toponymic standards in countries that have participated in training programs
- Regular review of the Working Group's contribution to the broader UNGEGN Strategic Plan goals

Evaluation reports will be compiled by the Convenor with input from all Working Group members and will be presented alongside the regular activity reports at UNGEGN sessions. These assessments will inform strategic adjustments to the Working Group's approaches and methodologies, ensuring responsive and effective programming.

9. Reporting

The Working Group will report on its activities at Bureau meetings and at each UNGEGN session and will submit working papers as required. The Convenor will be responsible for preparing and presenting these reports. Regular reporting ensures transparency and accountability, allowing the broader UNGEGN community to evaluate the Working Group's progress and provide guidance on future directions. These reports serve as valuable documentation of global toponymic training activities, creating a historical record of methodologies, challenges, and successes in capacity building efforts. The reporting process also provides opportunities to highlight successful training initiatives that might be replicated or adapted in other regions, facilitating knowledge transfer across the UNGEGN network.

10. Amendment, Modification or Variation

This TOR may be amended, varied, or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by Working Group members and approval by the UNGEGN Bureau. The amendment process balances the need for stability in the Working Group's operations with the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances in the field of toponymy. Any proposed changes should be circulated to all members with sufficient time for review and comment before formal consideration. The UNGEGN Bureau's approval role ensures that amendments align with broader organizational objectives and maintain consistency with the mandates of other Working Groups within the UNGEGN structure.