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Item 16 of the provisional agenda\*

### Collaboration with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

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### Note by the Secretariat

#### Summary

The present paper contains the report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its thirteenth session, held from 2 to 4 August 2023, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 13/114, in which it welcomed the report prepared by the Group of Experts on Geographical Names and noted the activities conducted to implement its strategic plan and programme of work for the period 2021–2029, including the launch of the redeveloped World Geographical Names database and the convening of the 2023 session of the Group of Experts from 1 to 5 May 2023, including the new national dialogue approach. The Committee of Experts reiterated its continued support for strengthening collaboration between the Committee of Experts and the Group of Experts, in particular the project to prepare a compendium of institutional arrangements on shared good practices for geographical names standardization between national mapping agencies and national names authorities, welcomed the offers from Member States to participate in and provide nominations for the proposed expert body joint task team, and further suggested examining the practicality of the options provided in order to identify a pragmatic approach towards implementation.

The Committee recognized the relevance of standardized geographical names to statistics and second-level administrative boundaries and the importance of the expert support of the Group of Experts to both the United Nations Geospatial Network, in its One United Nations Geospatial Situation Room initiative, and enabling data services deployed through United Nations One Map, and welcomed the closer collaboration and cooperation with the Group of Experts and the assurance of the United Nations Geospatial Network that it would liaise closely with the Group of Experts, including in the context of its World Geographical Names Database, to leverage the knowledge and expertise of the Group.

In this present report, the Group of Experts presents its activities conducted during the intersessional period to implement decision 13/114. It also provides a general update on the implementation of its strategic plan and programme of work 2021–2029, including the advancements made in redeveloping the World Geographical Names Database and related work done in advancing the proposal to generate a universal unique identifier for cities. The Group of Experts details the Bureau's participation in activities of the Economic and Social Council, such as the annual meeting of its subsidiary bodies, its contribution to the 2024 high-level political forum on

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\* E/C.20/2024/1

sustainable development, and the preparation of the Group of Experts annual infographic that details in a graphical form the outcomes from its 2023 session.

The Group also reports on efforts to strengthen relations between the Committee of Experts and the Group of Experts. This work includes the implementation of the collaborative project, which seeks to develop a compendium of institutional arrangements and operational good practices. Also reported is the preliminary work being done in support of the implementation of the collaborative project, through the collection of good practices emerging from relations between national mapping agencies and national names authorities on the basis of contributions made to the 67th issue of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names bulletin. The Group of Experts further reports on its other collaborative activities, including supporting initiatives pursued by its liaison partners such as the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History and the International Cartographic Association in advancing capacity development, research and the standardization of geographical names.

## I. Introduction

1. The Committee of Experts and the Group of Experts recognize geographical names as a fundamental geospatial data theme because of their essential function in the common identification of features and places of the real world. However, through their origin, their history and their current meaning, many of these names also express historical, linguistic and cultural data for which their users, particularly those of Indigenous peoples and minority language groups, attach a value far greater than that of this primary function. Respectful treatment of these names is, therefore, a necessity in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular target 11.4: “strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage,” and a benefit by improving the uptake and dissemination of geographical names tools among the general public.

2. This present report contains an overview of the Group of Experts’ activities conducted during the intersessional period to implement decision 13/114. It also provides a summary of the outcomes from the Group’s participation in the thirteenth session of the Committee of Experts and looks at the implementation of its Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029. Included in this report is the work being done on strengthening links and connections with other UN bodies, such as the Bureau’s participation in activities of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the redeveloped World Geographical Names Database, participation in the UN Maps Conference and convening a side event at the tenth plenary session of UN-GGIM Americas. Also included in the report is the work being done to strengthen relations between the Committee of Experts and the Group of Experts.

3. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report and to express its views on the work of the Group of Experts in strengthening collaboration with United Nations entities, and to identify other synergies and possible collaborative ventures that are mutually beneficial to both the Group and the Committee. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 33.

## II. Participation at the thirteenth session of UN-GGIM

4. At the thirteenth session of the Committee of Experts, a member of the UNGEGN expanded bureau introduced UNGEGN’s report (E/C.20/2023/18/Add.1) under agenda item 16 - Collaboration with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. A few of the topics covered were the convening of the Group’s 2023 session which featured new approaches, such as panel discussions and a national dialogue. The new features proved to be successful, interactive, contributed to knowledge transfer and the identification of common challenges and areas of work among Member States. Also featured in the report was an update on the collaborative project on the development of a compendium of institutional arrangements and operational good practices between National Geospatial/Mapping Agencies and Geographical Names Authorities. A summary of initial work done on garnering good practices is shared in section five and the appendix of this report.

5. During the session, thirteen Member States and three observers in their interventions under agenda item 16, reiterated their interest to support the project through providing nominations for the proposed task team and suggested examining the practicality of the options provided in order to identify a pragmatic approach towards implementation. Further to this decision representatives from Indonesia and the United States expressed strong support for advancing the collaborative project.

6. In pursuance of the decision to implement the collaborative project, a meeting was held with representatives from the Indonesian Geospatial Information Agency/Badan Informasi Geospasial (BIG), the United States Geological Survey, the United States Census Bureau, the Chair of the UN-GGIM-AP, facilitated by the Chair of UNGEGN and the UNSD as the UNGEGN secretariat. Indonesia and the United States will serve as co-leads in this project between UNGEGN and UN-GGIM. Of the five options tendered for project implementation a redefined option four was selected. This option

called for the joint coordination team of Indonesia and the USA, with supporting countries, to coordinate the conducting of self-studies by National Mapping Agencies and National Geographical Names Authorities, to identify good practices according to a template/questionnaire that is to be designed. It was decided that additional countries that have shown interest will be contacted to confirm their participation and support. A questionnaire will be designed to gather information on national practices and align with the nine strategic pathways of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF). In addition, existing materials including some possible questions prepared earlier and summaries from ten countries published in issue number 67, June 2024 in the UNGEGN Bulletin will be used as a foundation for developing the questionnaire. The initial meeting emphasized the importance of collaboration and clear communication to ensure the success of the project.

### III. Relationships, links and connections

#### **Contribution to ECOSOC - annual meetings of its subsidiary bodies and the High-Level Political Forum**

7. The annual meeting of ECOSOC with the chairs of its functional commissions and expert bodies, and the high-level political forum (HLPF) on SDGs follow-up and review, are two mechanisms which are used by the United Nations to encourage other multilateral processes, agencies and entities to participate and present the alignment of their work with the SDGs.

8. For the reporting period, the UNGEGN Secretariat supported the Bureau to contribute to deliberations and participate in the 2024 ECOSOC Coordination Segment meetings from 31 January to 1 February 2024. In the “Conversation with Executive Secretaries of Regional Commissions and Chairs of functional commissions and expert bodies on sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda”, the Chair of UNGEGN shared the Group of Expert’s work via video recording. His presentation featured what UNGEGN has been doing in supporting SDG goals 16 and 17, peace and justice and partnerships for the goals. He also spoke on partnering with UN bodies such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in the context of the International Decade of the Indigenous Languages, to support its efforts to safeguard, promote and restore indigenous geographical names by making them available in the form of databases. In closing, he called upon the Council to recognize the cultural and practical importance of having standardized geographical names.

9. Under the guidance of the UNGEGN Bureau, the UNGEGN secretariat prepared the Group of Expert’s contribution to the High-Level Political Forum that focused on the theme “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.” The paper featured case studies on sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs. Two cases were from Indonesia on ‘the use of Geographical Names in response to an Earthquake in West Java Province’, and ‘Building bonds with Academia’. Also featured were stories on ‘Strengthening relationships, links and connections in New Zealand’s geographical naming’ and ‘China innovatively uses television programming to promote geographical names awareness and strengthen its culture and heritage.’ Recommendations and key messages submitted with the paper included:

- (a) The recognition that the collective increased awareness of the emotional and spiritual aspects of cultural heritage in geographical naming offer improved connection, identity and belonging, contributing to equitable recognition of Indigenous geographical names, peoples and cultures.
- (b) Recognition that strengthening relationships, links and connections between the Group of Experts and other actors related to geographical

names, including national naming authorities, bodies of the United Nations, scientific, technical and academic groups, and private mapmakers or map users, would increase the capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The paper is accessible on the [ECOSOC 2024 High-Level Forum website](#).

### **Liaison Partners**

10. The role and importance of international organizations in contributing and exchanging information on the standardization of geographical names was recognized by the Group of Experts at its first conference in 1967. Liaison officers are responsible for ensuring optimal collaboration and promoting communication between their assigned body and the Group of Experts. Over its long history liaison relations were created with several international technical and academic organizations. The Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1998, recommended the establishment of a liaison with the International Organization for Standardization (Resolution VII/13). The Group went on to establish liaison with the Unicode Consortium, among others. See the [UNGEKN Liaison webpage](#) for additional information. For this report, the work done with two liaison partners, PAIGH and UN Maps is featured.

### **The Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH)**

11. PAIGH continues to work effectively on geographical names and has appointed a new liaison with UNGEKN. The Institute formally informed the Group of Experts of the following recent achievements in support of UNGEKN's programme of work:

- (a) Passed Resolution 3 (Spanish, English), raising the status of the Geographic Names Working Group to that of a Committee within the Cartographic Commission. The new committee will be known as the "José Joaquín Hungria Morell" Committee on Geographic Names. This committee is being led by the Dominican Republic national section.
- (b) Holding virtual and in-person conferences: a programme of events is to be facilitated by many different countries across the region, demonstrating the good level of engagement at the Member State level. The events focused on training for many different aspects of regulations and guidelines for the standardization of geographical names.

### **Collaboration with United Nations Maps**

12. At the 2023 session of UNGEKN, the Group of Experts in Recommendation 1 decided to support cooperation with United Nations Maps, a geospatial initiative aptly described by its tagline: 'Mapping the world, supporting peace, serving humanity', to harness the power of open geospatial data to support UN peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts. This recommendation was subsequently adopted by ECOSOC at its 43rd plenary meeting under decision 2023/336: - *The Economic and Social Council commended the achievements and the ongoing work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the standardization of geographical names and its contribution to the management and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and decided to support cooperation between the Group of Experts and United Nations Maps.*

13. UNGEKN contributed to the third annual UN Maps Conference in May 2024. This conference brought together UN Mappers, Member States, Geographical Information System (GIS) companies, academia, and others to discuss every aspect of mapping in the United Nations, including methods of data sharing across the UN and innovative techniques such as harnessing Artificial Intelligence and 3D modelling. The work of UN Maps complements the UNGEKN efforts on collaborative approaches to the production and use of geospatial information within national and global policy frameworks. And as place names are

recognised as a Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Theme, names are a core component of this geospatial endeavour.

14. UNGEGN believes that strengthening collaboration across the UN System, and through Member States, will provide opportunities to promote the importance of the collection and standardization of geographical names and to make national geographical names data available. UNGEGN will ensure continued support and collaboration with UN agencies and field missions on the use of standard geographical names. This will be facilitated with the forthcoming relaunch of the World Geographical Names Database, as this gives access to UNGEGN recommended names in a publicly available platform.

**Side event at the tenth plenary meeting of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Regional Committee for the Americas**

15. The United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Regional Committee of the Americas (UN-GGIM: Americas) tenth plenary meeting was convened at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as the technical secretariat for UN-GGIM: Americas in Santiago, Chile from 17 to 20 October 2023. It was attended by 106 attendees from 25 Member States, and 18 observer organizations. A representative of the UNSD supported the tenth plenary meeting through participating in the plenary session planning committee and designed and delivered a 90-minute side event on [‘Why Standardize Geographical Names and the UN-GGIM, UNGEGN Collaborative project.’](#) Fifteen participants from ten Member States – Brazil, Canada, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Venezuela participated in the side event. The side event featured interactive discussions and a names board simulation exercise which was greatly welcomed by the participants. It was observed that most participants were aware of UNGEGN and had geographical names work streams. It was noted that, due to a prime parallel event, some countries that would particularly have benefitted from the simulation exercise were not able to attend the UNGEGN side event.

**Redevelopment of the World Geographical Names Database (WGND)**

*The WGND and the Mandate from the 2023 UNGEGN Session*

16. In 2023, the Group of Experts was invited to consider and provide further guidance regarding the development of a unique identifier for cities and to express its views on how linked data and the semantic web can be integrated into the WGND. During this work, it was discovered that cities were not covered by existing UN geographical/area code standards, as is the case for countries, cf. the M49 Standard. Given that cities (generally with populations over 100,000) are one of the two primary data sources managed in the WGND, this needs to be addressed. Subsequently, the development of a “unique identifier for cities” was taken on by the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management (WG GNDM), including this as part of Action Item 1-i-5 of UNGEGN’s Programme of Work (“Promote and support the establishment of an authoritative international database/gazetteer of geographical names to be disseminated to the public through UNGEGN”)<sup>1</sup>.

*Current Status*

17. The revised UNGEGN-WGND is a reliable and extendable technical platform that seeks to promote and demonstrate that geographical names connect people to geographic locations. Further, the WGND enhances the capability of the Group of Experts to implement its strategic plan and programme of work for the period 2021-2029, including managing authoritative short and full country names of 193 United Nations Member States and two non-Member States observers, their

<sup>1</sup> See report GEGN.2/2023/73/CRP.73

capitals, and major cities (with population over 100,000), and other types of geographic names in a multilingual, multiscriptual and geo-referenced format. Primarily National Names Authorities provide authoritative city endonyms and sound files, which are included to assist users with pronunciation. The WGND contains endonyms, and exonyms, detailing over 2,700 country names, some 6,100 names for 3,362 cities, with more than 970 audio files. The main users of the WGND are geographers, toponymists, cartographers, planners, researchers, official and public institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and the general public.

18. Looking forward, the WG GNDM aims to promote the WGND to relevant UNGEGB working groups and other subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC, including the Statistical Commission and UN-GGIM. Following the development of a consistent and reliable unique identifier for cities, to present its progress to the Group of Experts at its 2025 session, and then to other relevant entities and groups as appropriate.

19. In the short term, the integration of geographical name data from UN System sources will focus on the Demographic Yearbook (which contains toponymic data provided by Member States for the purpose of dissemination of demographic statistics), as well as the UNTERM2 database. In the long term, the aim is to integrate with other authoritative UN sources such as the Second Administrative Level Boundary (SALB) initiative, the UN Gazetteer, and the UNLOCODE database, but this will be dependent on resourcing.

20. Given the database structure, pending the availability of resources and the needs of users, it may be possible in the future to extend the scope of WGND to include other names of specific national importance. However, this would require the ownership of relevant bodies to define appropriate data workflows and other cartographic concerns.

#### *The WGND journey*

21. A roadmap for the implementation of the WGND was presented on 4 May at the 2023 UNGEGN session. The roadmap<sup>3</sup> consists of three parts:

- (a) **WGND launch** (completed at the 2023 Session of UNGEGN, following Recommendation 2 and Decision 3/2023/17 of the 2023 Session see [E/2023/84](#))
- (b) **Data integration:** Ensure full geographic completeness of all countries and cities in scope (i.e., currently of over 100,000 population). This will be achieved through integrating, following quality review and assurance, toponymic data provided by (1) Member States, and (2) other authoritative sources from across the UN System.
- (c) **Data governance, feature improvement and future development.** This paper articulates some of the data governance needs, but the majority of feature improvement and development will be undertaken by the Secretariat within available resources.

22. Moreover, it is hoped that further engagement with Member States will help identify national focal points to establish and/or enhance coordination and data update mechanisms. A point of note is that while the WGND system is extendable, current resources prevent the addition of system features.

23. The concept note on the unique identifier for cities has been consulted with the UNGEGN Expanded Bureau as well as with the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical with Geospatial Information (EG-ISGI) of UN-GGIM.

<sup>2</sup> The UN Terminology database: <https://unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/>

<sup>3</sup> The WGN DB management responsibility for all three parts relies on UNSD – with the assistance of UNGEGN and contributions of data by the Member States

The concept note proposes a set of conditions and prerequisites to technically implement the recommendations supported by a unique identifier concept for a database structure which is as flexible (and extendable) as possible. Concerning 'Data Governance', the Group of Experts provides oversight for the WGND and has mandated the WG-GNDM to take over tasks concerning the technical support and assistance. The UN Statistics Division hosts the database and is responsible for its technical development and maintenance.

## **IV. UNGEGN Strategy and Work Programme - Key discussions**

### **Implementation of the UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029**

24. The UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029 has been revised with amendments adopted at the 2023 session and its second edition is now available on the UNGEGN website. Monitoring and evaluation of 51 action items under 18 objectives and 45 strategies has been ongoing. When needed, a restructuring of action items will be considered. The Strategic Plan and Programme of Work is expected to function as "a living document" that guides the activities for the standardization of geographical names, as confirmed by Recommendation 1 (ECOSOC Decision 2021/259) adopted at the 2021 session. Full-fledged reporting by every component of UNGEGN, including working groups, coordinators, divisions, and Member States, is anticipated at the 2025 session for the implementation during the second quarter of the Strategic Plan period.

### **Discussion on exonyms and their importance**

25. The Group of Experts is deepening the discussions and decided in 2021 to find guidelines that reconcile its old policy against exonyms and its recognition of geographical names as part of the cultural heritage. Several ideas have already emerged from these discussions that could form the basis of this reconciliation. Firstly, the policy against exonyms should be considered as limited to international use or to those that require political sensitivity. On the other hand, safeguarding a linguistic heritage depends above all on its use within a community of speakers. It could be also noted that according to the set of criteria established in 2012, certain place names have a higher importance as cultural heritage, and this applies to exonyms as well.

26. A decision needs to be taken by consensus, and the process to reach it will be sensitive. In May 2023, the Working Group on Exonyms discussed how to maintain the policy of reducing exonyms in international use, while safeguarding those comprising a part of the cultural heritage. The discussion led to a general agreement on a draft text that is still to be finally formulated, validated by interested national authorities, and inserted in a complete draft decision. This is to be done between now and the next session in April-May 2025, on-line meetings are to be set up for this purpose. This work should provide important viewpoints in preserving both the ease of communication and the ease of management, which remain technical necessities in the toponymy field.

## **V. UNGEGN - UN-GGIM Collaborative Project**

### **Good Practices**

27. The theme of the recent UNGEGN Bulletin #67, published in June 2024, was '*Good practices emerging from relations between National Mapping/Geospatial Data Management Agencies and Geographical Names Authorities*'. "Good practices" in this project are understood as any form of process, procedure, policy, agreement, standard, guideline, legislation, instrument,



communication, consultation protocol, or similar, that clearly conveys what's expected (whether mandatory or optional) to encourage the use of authoritative, official, standardized and consistent geographical names. The collaborative project between UNGEGN and UN-GGIM aims at identifying, collecting and disseminating in a compendium some tools that should support Member States to increase or improve cooperation, create synergies and share knowledge on the standardization of geographical names.

28. The standardization of geographical names ensures consistency in the use of geographical names, which provides innumerable advantages, such as practical, unambiguous, fundamental and unique location identification and navigation for the physical landscape we live in, identifying where we are as we go about our everyday business – they are a component of infrastructure, and they matter in emergency responses. Standardized names provide a fundamental data theme for geospatial data layers and demonstrate jurisdictional interests. Last but not least, standardization may provide recognition of heritage and culture, acknowledging a sense of place, identity, belonging and connection, at the same time it ensures that important names are preserved and restored. In summary, quoting the Chair, in UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029: “geographical names contribute to efficient communication and government administration, they enable the linking of data for a wide range of public and private purposes, and they give appropriate weight to culture and heritage.”

29. To profit from all these advantages, UNGEGN's vision is for “every country to have a fully functioning and globally-aligned structure and policy framework, based on common principles for national standardization of authorized geographical names that identify the location and respect the associated culture and heritage, and to have these names easily accessible for national and international use – facilitating consistent worldwide use of geographical names to foster communication and cooperation”.

30. In its Bulletin #67, UNGEGN invited countries to share their approaches to achieve the accuracy, consistency, and usability of geographic information across various applications through the collaboration between their national Mapping/Geospatial Data Management Agencies and national Geographical Names Authorities.

31. Interesting articles were submitted by ten Member States: Armenia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Jordan, New Zealand, Oman, the Russian Federation and Saudi Arabia. Drawing from the articles, it was possible to identify some basics to achieve good practices, as well as common areas in which these practices are developed and some aspects these practices do not contemplate. A summary of the good practices found across the ten articles is provided in the Appendix.

32. The ten Member States articles offer valuable insights as to how those countries operate between their national Mapping/Geospatial Data Management agencies and national Geographical Names Authorities. They form a useful starting point for the project between UNGEGN and UN-GGIM ‘to collaborate on the development of a compendium of institutional arrangements on shared good practices for geographical names standardization between national mapping and geospatial agencies and national names authorities, to increase cooperation, create synergies and share knowledge and good practices for the standardization of geographical names.’ UNGEGN will report at its 2025 Session on the progress of this project which is being led by Indonesia and the United States.

## **V. Points for discussion**

**33. The Committee of Experts is invited to:**

**(a) Take note of the present report provided by the Group of Experts on Geographic Names and express its views on its activities and progress;**

**(b) Take note that the 2025 Session of the Group of Experts is from 28 April to 2 May 2025 and for the Committee to consider attending the session, present a report and deliver a special presentation; and**

**(c) Take note that Indonesia and the United States of America are co-leading the UNGEGN – UN-GGIM collaborative project, express its views and encourage representatives from the Committee of Experts to support upcoming activities including self-assessment exercises to identify and document their good practices.**

## APPENDIX

### Good Practices –

#### National Mapping /Geospatial Agencies and National Geographical Names Authorities

1. Whether operating with their mapping, geospatial data and naming functions under ‘one roof’, usually within or associated with surveying departments, or within different organizations, or de-centralized, communication among institutions, teams as well as with the public appears as a key factor for success, fostering collaboration and cooperation. Thus, the countries mention:

- Regular meetings;
- Presentations at conferences;
- Documentation of processes;
- Education and training;
- Consulting with the locals, including indigenous and minority groups;
- Local government consultations;
- Proactive media announcements, among other practices.

2. Other important factors also appear, such as:

- Allocation of sufficient budget;
- Ensuring teams are well resourced to deliver on core functions and expectations;
- Ensuring language standardization;
- Governance structure comprising National Mapping/Geospatial Data Management Agencies and National Geographical Names Authorities;
- Standards aligning with international standards.

3. UN-GGIM is encouraged to recognize and support the use of standardized geographical names in all mapping and geospatial data products/publications/applications. The power of global action by UN-GGIM will add to their relevance and uptake. Mutual benefits can be measured and reflect the collaborative success between mapping, geospatial data and geographic names. This may include:

- Confidence by governments and users of the various products, optimizing public services;
- Widespread re-use resulting in uptake within government, local authorities, businesses, and communities, and consequent increase in user collaboration, ensuring improved geographical name accuracy and minimizing errors and confusion;
- Authoritative and official geographical names become established and accepted through use on maps, charts and in geospatial data;
- Agile approach to working within and across teams responsible for mapping, geospatial data and naming, resulting in continuous improvement of processes, practices and procedures;
- Efficiencies gained through systems being integrated, especially quality control and avoidance of duplication of work;
- Awareness raising about the importance of geographical names as fundamental data, especially for context and searching.

4. There are several common areas of good practice between mapping/geospatial data agencies and national naming authorities identified by the ten countries, which serve as a model for others to potentially adopt. These include:

- Having an independent national naming authority with wide representation and expertise (toponymy, cartography, history, geography, surveying, hydrography, back country, linguistics, etc.);
- Legislation, in particular compliance and enforcement provisions;

- Government decision making to emphasize authority and authenticity;
  - Gazetteers and use of common identifiers for interoperability, with additional functionality such as audio for pronunciation guidance;
  - Open, free, accessible, re-usable data;
  - Aligning with international standards, such as the IHO4.
5. It is worth noting that the implemented systems are solution-oriented, relevant, user-friendly, innovative, and fully and equitably accessible.
6. Among the many relevant positive outcomes of the collaboration between their National Mapping/Geospatial Data Management Agencies and National Geographical Names Authorities is that the pursuance of geographical names standardization and alignment with international standards carried out by these successful countries, allowed for the strengthening of international relations to achieve common strategic goals, aligned with the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
7. Of extreme importance, though, is that in this process, opportunities arise to collect and disseminate the stories that go with authoritative and official geographical names, creating opportunities to acknowledge, restore and/or preserve original names, fostering the reinforcement of cultural identities and sense of belonging, along with the improvement of accuracy, consistency and standardization of geographical names, which are the ultimate goals of good geographical naming practice, empowering communities, according to the SDG principle of ‘leave no one behind’.
8. Summing up, quoting Jordan’s report, “...these practices that took place between the stakeholders in the subject of geographical names and the various authorities .....had the greatest impact in preserving the cultural heritage and facilitating communication between the concerned authorities and not conflicting and duplication of work, which contributed to saving expenses and building a database that will benefit everyone, especially decision-makers for sustainable development work, in order to sustain the strategic plan of the Committee, which is clearly consistent with the framework of strategy 2 (relations and links) of the Strategic Plan 2021 - 2029 of (UNGEGN)”. Also, as reported by Saudi Arabia, the unified model combining the roles of the National Mapping Agency and the Authority for Geographical Names provided its organization for mapping and geospatial information “focus on accuracy and consistency in geographical data”, streamlining processes and elevating the quality of topographical maps and the Geoportal. According to their experience, “this collaborative approach model stands as a valuable example for other countries aiming to enhance their geospatial information management practices.”
9. Nevertheless, despite progress, challenges persist, and the countries report vast geographical areas, limited academic resources, and the need for standardized romanization, for example. To address these challenges, governance processes and enhancement of technical capabilities through collaboration with academia and industry are being developed, as well as the refinement of romanization methods approved by UNGEGN.
10. It is important to highlight that UNGEGN recognizes the importance of raising awareness, educating and emphasizing the need within the UN system (particularly for those that produce maps for data visualization and innovative GIS tools), of the absolute requirement for them to use standardized geographical names as a fundamental component in their products, especially for context, location identification and elimination of ambiguity. UNGEGN has experts who readily deal with authoritative administrative boundaries and their standardized names (which are acknowledged as being difficult, frequently changing and being researched independently of one another), and so having and sharing that knowledge from UNGEGN experts would help join up the Member States and the UN system.