

# THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES (UNGEGN) - PROMOTING THE CONSISTENT USE OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

## UNGEGN MEDIA KIT

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This kit, addressing individual topics pertinent to the standardization of geographical names, provides basic information to answer questions from the media, and aims to assist UNGEGN experts promote the work they do and raise awareness of issues relating to geographical names.

### Our use of geographical names

Wherever we go in the world and whatever we do – walking around town, looking up a telephone number, surfing the internet, reading a recipe book or shopping for new clothes – we encounter geographical names. They surround us all day long, providing us not only with a sense of place but also with a means of finding our way about, searching for information and organizing and managing the world we live in. For all of us, a geographical name is a reference point of our language and our identity.

### Names as keys to accessing data

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, names of places and features have become vital keys to accessing our digital world. They are an indispensable locational component of any spatially organized information system and help enable the integration of digital data sets which become essential and powerful decision-making tools for policy makers and managers in every sector of business and government. Geographical names are, therefore, more than just place names on a map; they are a fundamental means of communication, aiding cooperation among local, national and international organizations.

### Avoiding confusion

Because the world is constantly changing and language is, by its very nature, flexible, the name of a geographical feature can have different forms. This is a problem for the cartographer or database manager who requires clear, unmistakable geographical references. The avoidance of ambiguity and confusion in written form is facilitated by the standardization of geographical names at a national level or by international convention that includes the correspondence between different languages and writing systems.

### Geographical names and UNGEGN

Since it was established in 1946, the United Nations has addressed the need for geographical names standardization, recognizing it as a key element of the communication needed to enable it to become the world's most effective voice for international cooperation on behalf of peace, development, human rights and the environment. A series of meetings, debates and recommendations on this subject led to the formation of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Through its specialist Working Groups, Divisions, Coordinators and Task Teams, UNGEGN facilitates the development and dissemination of principles, policies and methods suitable for resolving the problems of consistency in the use of geographical names. By helping to establish standardization guidelines and by encouraging individual countries to provide officially approved names, the United Nations aims to enhance the creation of usable and consistent written forms of geographical names throughout the world.

## Developing the Media Kit

Noting the need to increase the interest of the wider international community in the standardization of geographical names and the work of UNGEGN, resolutions VI/5 was passed in 1992, establishing a Working Group on Publicity and Funding. In addition, resolution IX/10 of 2007 provided for the initiation of the Media Kit.

The Kit was first prepared by the Working Group in 2011 and has seen ongoing updates since then. With the flexible format, changes can be made and new pages can be added from time to time.

Within this Media Kit you will currently find pages addressing core topics including:

- Geographical names – part of our social and cultural values
- Geographical names in a changing world
- Geographical names – location identifiers: embracing digital transformation
- What is UNGEGN and what does it do?
- How does UNGEGN work?
- Resolutions and decisions of UNGEGN
- Why do we need geographical names standardization?
- Where to find out more about geographical names
- Other organizations involved in the standardization of geographical names
- Frequently asked questions
- What's in a name? "Quotable Quotes"