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**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names**
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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of
geographical names****Report of the Philippines****Summary****

The Philippines is an archipelago composed of the three main island groups of Luzon, Visayan and Mindanao, with a total land area of 300,000 km². The central Government resides in the capital city of Manila and the national capital region of Metro Manila. The local government units comprise the provinces, cities, municipalities and the smallest political unit called the barangay. Overall, there are 17 regions consisting of 81 provinces, 145 cities and 1,489 municipalities. There is a total of 42,045 barangays in the country.

The first effort to standardize geographical names in the Philippines dates back to 1900 with the establishment of the Philippine Committee on Geographical Names, the main function of which was to resolve issues on geographical names. However, it was discontinued in 1973 owing to government reorganization.

Since that time, there has been no geographical naming authority in the Philippines, although natural and human-made features already have their own local names. Those geographical names are being validated by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, as the central mapping agency of the Government, during the conduct of field verification activities and as part of its regular activity of updating the topographic maps of the country at the scales of 1:50,000 and 1:10,000. Data on geographical names are first gathered at the provincial, city and municipal planning offices of local government units and later validated on the ground. All geographical names are stored and integrated into the central digital topographic database of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority.

* GEGN.2/2019/1.

** The full report was prepared by Peter N. Tiangco, Administrator, National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, and Ruel D.M. Belen, Director, Mapping and Geodesy Branch, National Mapping and Resource Information Authority. The report will be available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/1st_session_UNGEGN.html, in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2019/32/CRP.32.



Presently, the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority is updating the Philippine gazetteer based on topographic maps on a scale of 1:50,000. The previous gazetteer was published in 1989 based on topographic maps on a scale of 1:250,000.

From 19 to 24 March 2018, the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority sponsored the first United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names regional training on toponymy, including marine toponymy, in Manila, which included participants from the Asia South-East Division and national government offices. Presentations were given by six experts from the Group of Experts and four local experts. Topics included naming principles, terminology, standardization of geographical names, name collecting techniques, processing of geographical names, database creation, specific aspects of marine and underwater naming and toponyms as a cultural heritage. A mock exercise of a “geographic names board” meeting was also undertaken.

The National Mapping and Resource Information Authority is proposing the revival of the Philippine Committee on Geographical Names in order to avoid confusion as to the official names of features to be indicated on topographic maps, which also include maritime and underwater features for nautical charts. Its members should come from other government agencies, especially the local government units, because of their distinct familiarity and knowledge of place names in their respective localities.
