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## United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

### 2019 session

New York, 29 April–3 May 2019

Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

### Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and the progress made in the standardization of geographical names

## Report of Iceland

### Summary\*\*

The full report is the first national report of Iceland submitted to a conference or session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. A short report on the situation with place names in Iceland was included as an appendix to the report of the Norden Division and submitted to the twenty-third session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, held in Vienna in 2006.

The aim of the report is to provide general background on the status of collection, standardization and publication of geographical names in Iceland and to outline recent developments and initiatives in this sphere. The report contains six sections.

The first section concerns the linguistic background. Iceland is historically a unilingual country; Icelandic, which is written in a Latin or roman alphabet, is the national language and the only official language of the country, but Icelandic sign language is also officially recognized by the Government.

The second section sets out place name legislation in Iceland and a number of administrative procedures – outlined in the Place Name Act of 2015 – that apply to various standardization issues and involve the interaction and cooperation of government bodies at the municipal and national levels, as well as State institutes: the mapping agency – National Land Survey of Iceland; the address and cadastral office – Registers Iceland; and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. With regard to government bodies, the role of the official Place Name Committee is of particular importance.

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\* [GEGN.2/2019/1](#).

\*\* The full report was prepared by Aðalsteinn Hákonarson of the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. The report will be available at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st\\_session\\_UNGEKN.html](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st_session_UNGEKN.html), in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2019/45/CRP.45.



In a subsection, the author discusses the increased role that the Place Name Act of 2015 gives to municipalities in approving new and changed names of farms and the challenges that this poses in fulfilling the general aims of the Place Name Act, including the maintenance of good place name practices.

The third section contains a sketch of the history and results of the work undertaken in collecting place names in Iceland. The Institute for Icelandic Studies is in charge of the Icelandic Place Name Collection containing an estimated half a million names. Work on digitizing the collection and creating an online database is expected to begin in 2019.

The fourth section provides an overview of available toponymic datasets. These include the Place Name Collection of the Institute for Icelandic Studies, the digital database IS 50V of the National Land Survey of Iceland, which includes more than 120,000 localized place names, and the digital address database of Registers Iceland.

The fifth section contains a list of relevant publications and websites.

The sixth section provides contact details.

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