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Reports: Divisions of the Group of Experts

**Report of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of
the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
(UNGEGN)**

Submitted by the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division **

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** Prepared by the Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography

Summary:

In the period 2019-2020 the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (hereinafter – Division) included experts from the following 11 countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Besides, experts from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Estonia participated in the events of the Division as observers.

The report highlights the outcomes of the first meeting of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the reorganized UNGEGN, held in 2019 in Dushanbe (Republic of Tajikistan), including the election of the Member States of the Division, whose representatives are entrusted with the powers of the Divisional Chairperson (Russian Federation) and Divisional Vice-Chair (Republic of Kazakhstan), as well as the adoption of the Rules of the Division.

The Report points out substantial progress in the national standardization of geographical names achieved in Division's Member States.

The Report also underlines a successful collaboration of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division with the Baltic Division of the UNGEGN and the Working Group on Geographical Names of the Interstate Council for Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Remote Sensing of the Earth of the CIS Member States.

The XLI session of the Interstate Council for Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Remote Sensing of the Earth of the CIS Member States (hereinafter - the Interstate Council) was held in Dushanbe on September 17-19, 2019 with the support of the State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan.

This session also hosted a meeting of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (hereinafter referred to as the Division).

The decision to form the Division was made at the sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held from August 25 to September 3, 1992 in New York.

At the present time experts from the following 11 countries are involved in Division's work on permanent basis: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Experts from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Estonia participated in the meetings of the Division as observers.

From April 29 to May 3, 2019 representatives of the Division took part in the first session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (hereinafter referred to as the UNGEGN) which was held at the headquarters of the United Nations (New York).

Strategies, methodologies and best practices for naming geographic objects were discussed. This session also reviewed the Charter, Rules of Procedure and structure of the UNGEGN.

The Linguistic and Geographic Divisions also continue to participate in the UNGEGN under the Rules. Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Divisions stimulate the standardization of geographical names within their divisions using all appropriate means, including organizing meetings of division members.

Earlier, at the fourteenth meeting of the Division, held in 2017 in the Russian Federation (Irkutsk), it was decided to elect a representative from the Russian Federation as the Chairperson of the Division and a representative from the Republic of Kazakhstan as the Vice-Chair of the Division. In addition, the post of Secretary of the Division was introduced to address organizational issues.

At the fifteenth meeting of the Division, held in 2018 in the Republic of Uzbekistan (Tashkent) representatives of the Member States of the Division supported the initiative of the Russian Federation to develop and approve the Rules of the Division.

In this regard, the Russian Federation, represented by the Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography, developed and sent to the members of the Division a draft Rules of the Division for consideration.

A discussion of the draft Rules of the Division was organized at the meeting of the Division of the reorganized UNGEGN, within the framework of the XLI session of the Interstate Council. As a result of this discussion it was approved. During the session elections of the Member States of the Division, whose representatives will be entrusted with the powers of the Chairperson and the Vice-Chair of the Division were also held.

Member States of the Division paid special attention to the activities of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers and the possibility of applying the best practices of this group in their countries.

The analysis of the results of the work of the Division led to the following conclusions:

1. State laws to consolidate the legal framework for standardization, usage and preservation of national geographical names were adopted in all Division's countries.
2. Official state bodies are appointed to take decisions on geographical names in Division's countries. Toponymic commissions are operational to coordinate efforts of the specialists from all organizations and agencies concerned in these activities.
3. State electronic catalogues, registers and database of geographical names are successfully developed. Many of them already meet the needs of state bodies, organizations, companies and civic community in official geographical names data. The volume of information services is increasing every year.
4. National romanization systems are used in most Division's countries.
5. Lists of exonyms are being compiled and published in some Member States.

Exchange of information and experience that is a part of international cooperation contributed to the progress in the national standardization of geographical names made by the countries.

Collaboration of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division with the Baltic Division develops successfully. Experts from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine participated in four meetings held by the Baltic Division.

Representatives of Division's Member States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) are actively cooperating with the Working Group on Geographical Names of the Interstate Council of the CIS countries for 20 years. The Working Group pursues the task to provide a regular exchange of information on all official changes in geographical names. As a result of this cooperation e-Bulletin "Changes in Geographical Names in the CIS Countries" has been compiled and is being annually updated. The bulletin contains information on the official changes of names of geographical objects that have taken place in 11 countries since 1990. Along with Russian language forms of geographical names, the Bulletin contains their spelling in the national language of the country. The Bulletin is available on the official website of Rosreestr (www.rosreestr.gov.ru).

It should be noted that the meeting of the Division scheduled for 2020 in Moscow (Russian Federation) did not take place due to the epidemiological situation in the world. However, the Member States of the Division look forward to a fruitful collaboration in 2021.

Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

Comment and provide input on similar work being carried out in other divisions