

24 March 2023

English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names
2023 session
New York, 1 – 5 May 2023
Item 10 of the provisional agenda *
Toponymic Education**

**Spatial Information Capacity Building Program with
Member States of the PAIGH**

Submitted by Republic of Korea **

Summary

In November 2022, the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea invited members of the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) to host the “Geographical Names and Spatial Information Capacity Building Program.” From November 15th to 17th, 18 government officials and experts from 17 countries in the Americas participated in the capacity building program held at the Suwon Convention Center, representing each country. The main agenda of the capacity building program supervised by the NGII was “geographical names and spatial information.” In particular, courses such as ① understanding the Korean geographical name system, ② domestic and international toponymic research trends and implications, ③ introduction to Korean geospatial information policies, and ④ utilization of national satellite information and new technologies, among others, were available to make clear to member states of the PAIGH the importance of geographical names and geospatial information. In detail, the contents of the capacity building program included the introduction of Korea’s geography, map and geographical names system, the principles and trends of the UN standardization of geographical names, the characteristics of geographical names as cultural heritage and brands, the current status and prospects of Korea’s geospatial information system (digital twin), and discussions on the use of national satellite technology and outputs. Over the course of the program, participants from PAIGH member states shared their opinions and joined the discussions in a constructive manner.

* GEGN.2/2023/1

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Spatial Information Capacity Building Program with Member States of the PAIGH¹

Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH)

Established in 1928, the PAIGH promotes, coordinates, and supports research related to cartography, geography, history, and geophysics in the Americas. In 1930, a secretariat of the PAIGH was opened in Mexico City. In 1949, the PAIGH began activities as a specialized agency under the Organization of American States (OAS). The PAIGH is composed of four standing committees: cartography, geography, history, and geophysics, and has a total of 21 member states.² There are five permanent observer countries, including the Republic of Korea, Spain, France, Israel, and Jamaica. The Republic of Korea is the only Asian country among member states and permanent observer countries of the PAIGH.

Inviting Members of the PAIGH and Implementing Geographical Names and Geospatial Information Capacity Building Program

At the 49th PAIGH Board of Directors meeting held in November 2019, the Republic of Korea joined as a permanent observer country. As the only country in Asia associated with the PAIGH, the Republic of Korea promised to provide capacity building programs in the field of geographical names and spatial information to member states of the PAIGH. The NGII, affiliated with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea, planned to organize a training program by inviting 21 member states in 2020 to fulfill its promise and promote cooperation. However, considering the global spread of COVID-19 and subsequent quarantine measures, the capacity building program was provided online.

In November 2022, the NGII invited PAIGH member states to attend a “Geographical Names and Spatial Information Capacity Building Program.” Representing each country, 18 government officials from 17 countries in charge of geographical names and geospatial information participated in the capacity building program held from November 15th to 17th. The participants were nominated by member states of the PAIGH and were experts in charge of establishing and implementing policies in the field of geographical name standardization and spatial information management. Korean and Spanish were used as the languages of the program.

The main subject of the capacity building program supervised by the NGII was geographical names and spatial information. The capacity building program consisted of a variety of lectures on the topics of ① understanding the Korean geographical names system, ② domestic and international toponymic research trends and implications, ③ introducing Korean geospatial information policies, and ④ using satellite information and new technologies. In detail, the contents of the capacity building program included the introduction of Korea’s geography, map, and geographical names system, the principles and trends of the UN standardization of geographical names, the characteristics of geographical names as cultural heritage and brands, the current status and prospects of the Korean spatial information system (digital twin), and the use of national satellite technology and outputs. Following the presentation, free discussions were conducted by the program participants. As well as

¹ This working paper pertains to the UNCSGN resolutions III/15, IV/5, V/21, IX/10 (Education and Training in Treatment of Geographical Names).

² The USA, Mexico, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Venezuela

exchange of work experiences and information, opinions were exchanged on major pending tasks and projects in the field of geographical names and spatial information in each member state of the PAIGH.

In addition, the capacity building program also included experiential education programs such as ① geography of Korea seen from the DMZ, ② visits to the National Geospatial Satellite Center and Map Museum under the NGII, and ③ visits to “Suwon Hwaseong Fortress,” a traditional Korean cultural asset and UNESCO World Heritage site. This was a great help in introducing and understanding Korea to the participants.

Achievements and Significance of Geographical Names and Spatial Information Capacity Building Program

The Geographical Names and Spatial Information Capacity Building Program, which was conducted together with the member states of the PAIGH, allowed participants to gather together at one place and provided time for valuable discussions. In particular, the geography, map, and geographical name system introduced by the Republic of Korea, the principles and trends of the UN standardization of geographical names, and the operation of digital twins and national satellites were expected to be of great help to member states of the PAIGH that are interested in map production, geography, history, and geophysics. As expected, there was a request for cooperation and information sharing. This trust in Korea’s technology and capabilities in the field of geographical names and spatial information, trust is expected to help continuous and smooth exchanges and cooperation among PAIGH member states in the future.

In 2023, the Republic of Korea is planning to host another session of the “Geographical Names and Spatial Information Capacity Building Program”, in order to facilitate further exchange with member states of the PAIGH. The Republic of Korea wishes for the growth and development of the PAIGH.

Points for discussion:

The group of experts is invited to:

- (a) Pay attention to the beginning and development of the “Geographical Names and Spatial Information Capacity Building Program” organized in the Republic of Korea with the participation of member states of the PAIGH; and
- (b) Present views on the achievements and significance of the “Geographical Names and Spatial Information Capacity Building Program.”