

23 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

**Report of the Working Group on Training Courses in
Toponymy**

Submitted by The Convenor of the Working Group on Training Courses
in Toponymy **

Summary:

The full report constitutes a record of the activities of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy for the period 2021–2023. The report focuses on the preparations for the staging of a toponymy training course to be held from 19 to 23 June 2023 in Bali, Indonesia, shortly after the 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, to be held in New York.

The online webinars of the Group of Experts, initiated after the 2021 session in order to strengthen toponymy capacities, are outlined in the report. The report features three webinars. The first webinar, held on 31 August 2021, was entitled “Geographical names standardization supporting national development”; the second, held on 10 May 2022, was on the theme “Developing digital gazetteers using free and open-source software”; and the third, held on 30 September 2022, was entitled “Linked open data developments – what’s in [it] for UNGEGN and its experts”.

Also included in the report are the contributions the Working Group made to the overall operation of the Group of Experts, through participation in meetings of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission and of the Statistics Division.

* GEGN.2/2023/1

** Prepared by the Convenor of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, Peder Gammeltoft, Norway.

Report of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

Convenor's report

A. Preamble

1. UNGEGN stimulates the organization of training courses in toponymy to increase awareness of the need for geographical names standardization and, especially, to help fill the need for qualified personnel. The general model The Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy for a course is a one-week program of lectures, alternated by exercises, fieldwork, and instructions in techniques in digital geographical names recording, handling and storage.
2. The ambition is to hold at least one toponymy training course every year for an international audience, and this has been carried out in this way since 1982, apart from the pandemic period of 2020-2022.
3. A valuable result of these toponymy training courses is a substantial collection of lecture material, manuals and fieldwork notes from which lecturers and trainers of Toponymy can gain valuable information and inspiration. In addition to activities by the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, a parallel series of courses has been organized by the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), have since 1987 been provided for Latin American countries.

B. Online Webinar Series

4. The Group of Experts initiated a series of online webinars after the 2021 session in order to strengthen toponymy capacities. A total of three webinars have been produced. The first webinar was held on 31st August 2021 and was entitled *Geographical names standardization supporting national development*; the second webinar was held on 10th May 2022, was on the theme *Developing digital gazetteers using free and open-source software*. The third and last seminar was held on 30th September 2022, and carried the title *Linked open data developments – what's in it for UNGEGN and its experts*.
5. The webinars have been very popular and have been followed by an ever-growing number of participants for each seminar. The format seems to be well-suited for an international community such as that of UNGEGN and its geographical names experts. The convenor recommends to continue with the webinar series in the coming years.

C. Toponymy Training Courses 2021-2023

6. Owing to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been no regional or international UNGEGN Training Courses on Toponymy Since the last UNGEGN Plenary Meeting in 2021 – which was held in digital format. Indonesia wished to have a regional training program for 2020, but this was postponed for safety reasons until 19th-23rd June 2023. See under item 4 for more information.
7. In addition, Sudan has recently requested assistance from UNGEGN, including a training course in toponymy. The convenor is in contact with the Sudan Board of Geographical Names regarding setting up a training course.

D. International/regional training courses

8. A regional training course is to be held 19th-23rd June 2023 in Bali, Indonesia and organized by the Indonesian mapping agency, BIG and the Working Group for Training Courses in Toponymy. The topic of the course is *Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage*. The course will run for the better part of a week, where training and field work will be conducted under this topic. The organizers expect to welcome 75-100 participants. The UN Statistics Division has allocated funds to support the participation 4 to 5 participants from developing countries.

9. The course is mainly aimed at participants from the Asia South-East Division, but attendees from other parts of the world are also very welcome. If interested in participating, please visit the events calendar on the UNGEGN homepage for further information. Queries are welcome and should be directed to the Convenor of this working group (peder.gammeltoft@uib.no).

10. Part of the course will also constitute an experiment into open-source software which can be used for collection of geographical names. A total of three Open Source data collection software applications will be tested and reported on at the next UNGEGN Meeting in 2025 and in the UNGEGN Bulletin.

E. Requesting UNSD Training Support

11. The Working Group would very much like to hear from experts or organizations planning or wishing to undertake international or regional training events in cooperation with UNGEGN at this Session. To initiate the proper procedure for convening UNGEGN training events, requests for support should approach the convenor of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding. The requestors should have completed the training request proposal form (provided as an attachment to this report). The request will be evaluated, and a decision taken pending the availability of funds from the UNSD and trainers.

12. Requests for UNGEGN training support should be submitted in advance of biennial sessions to enable the Working Group on Publicity and Funding to make the necessary decisions and arrangements so that such requests may be presented to a session of the Group of Experts for their approval.

F. Training material

13. A report from the previous UNGEGN Meeting, GEGN.2/2021/66/CRP.66, encouraged the creation of online toponymy training courses under the auspices of this working group. The need for virtual courses is found to be a good idea, although the matter probably will need further thought and investigation to assure that such courses live up to accessibility standards, etc. Thus, the plan is still to attempt a handful or so online courses, and the convenor invites interested to share ideas and input for online courses within the following areas of instruction:

- The naming process
- Standardization of toponyms
- Collection of geographical names
- Office processing of geographical names
- Producing names databases

14. With the participation of UNGEGN in the recent UNMAPS conference in Valencia, 6th-11th March 2023, in recent memory, it is also worth exploring if the Working Group can be of assistance internally in the UN system in terms of providing guidance and teaching material for mapmakers

and GIS specialists. See also report GEGN.2/2023/128/CRP.128 exploring the ways in which UNGEGN can assist UNMAPS.

G. Working group composition and next Working Group meeting

15. The Working Group working on the current Training Course in Bali, Indonesia, has effectively consisted of:

- Jasper Hogherwerf
- Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu
- Tjeerd Tischelaar
- Mr Peder Gammeltoft
- Ms Cecille Blake (Secretariat)

16. This team has effectively constituted the WG planning team for the coming training course (see item 2). However, the Convenor would like to have a pool of interested, committed and available experts to be able to find the best suitable team for future UNGEGN training courses. Thus, this convenor invites everyone interested to attend the Working Group meeting scheduled to take place at this session on Friday May 5th at 8.15-9.30, in Conference Room CR-7.

H. Useful literature in toponymic education

- Kadmon, Naftali, 2000: *Toponymy: The Lore, Laws of Language of Geographical Names*. New York: Vantage Press.
- The world of maps. (Manual on cartography and GIS. Can be downloaded from the ICA website (<http://mapyear.org/the-world-of-maps-overview/>)
- United Nations Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names. New York, 2002. (Free download)
- United Nations Manual for the national standardization of geographical names. New York, 2006. (Free download available in all 6 UN languages)
- United Nations Technical reference manual for the standardization of geographical names. New York, 2007. (Free download)

17. Please inform the Convenor of any new additions to this bibliography.

I. Points for discussion

18. The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (a) Take note of the present report and express its view on the efforts of the Working group to assist Member States in their capacity building and in the development and management of geographical names standardization.
- (b) Invite Experts to share ideas and input for online courses and to volunteer their services to support UNGEGN training courses.
- (c) Encourage experts to become members of the working group and participate in the upcoming meeting to be held during the 2023 session.