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English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names**

2025 session

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda *

**Relationships, links and connections: Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial
Information Management****Progress report on the Group of Experts and Committee of
Experts collaborative project on shared good practices
between national mapping agencies and national names
authorities**

Submitted by Indonesia and the United States of America

Summary**

In many countries, national mapping agencies (NMAs) and national names authorities (NNAs) are separate organizations, resulting in duplicated efforts, inconsistent data, and inefficient resource use. Even when both entities are part of the same organization, their interaction may be limited. Challenges such as insufficient awareness of the importance of geographical names, budget constraints, and a lack of prioritization for geographical names standardization further impede progress¹. Within the UN system the subject of global geospatial management and national mapping agencies is supported by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) and geographical names standardization is supported by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Over the past seven years, both bodies have been working together to strengthen relations. At its twelfth session in 2022, the Committee of Experts in Decision 12/114 supported the initiation of a collaborative project proposed by the Group of Experts, to develop a compendium of institutional arrangements on shared good practices for geographical names standardization between national mapping and geospatial agencies and national names authorities.

This project aims to strengthen collaboration between mapping and geographical naming activities within the country while identifying, compiling, and documenting their good practices to enhance the coordination and efficiency of their organizations. The project was initiated by decisions taken by both intergovernmental bodies. The Group of Experts at its 2023 session in decision 3/2023/9 (see [E/2023/84](#)), supported the collaborative project and welcomed the offer by Indonesia to assist with its

* * GEGN.2/2025/1

** Prepared by Indonesia and the United States of America

¹ Refer to the Report on the Collaborative Project in the 2023 UNGEN Session, under appendix I at [GEGN.2/2023/115/CRP.115](#).

implementation. The Committee of Experts at its fourteenth session in decision 14/114 clause (c) (see [E/2025/46-E/C.20/2024/19](#)), welcomed the progress of the collaborative project and appreciated the leadership provided by Indonesia and the United States of America and encouraged Member States to contribute to the upcoming activities. Given these decisions, senior representatives of the Geospatial Information Agency (*Badan Informasi Geospasial*-BIG) of Indonesia and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) co-led this project. With support of the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), the UNGEGN secretariat, and support staff from both organizations, a joint expert group on geographical naming and geospatial information management comprised of BIG, USGS, the United States Census Bureau, and the UNGEGN Secretariat was established to implement the collaborative project.

Beginning in June 2024, the joint expert group has convened meetings, generally on a bi-weekly rhythm attended by representatives from Indonesia and the United States of America, as well as the Chair of UNGEGN and the UNGEGN Secretariat. These meetings resulted in agreements on project implementation, including the development of a user-friendly questionnaire aligned with the initiative's objectives.

In December 2024, the joint expert group invited Member States representatives of UN-GGIM and UNGEGN to participate in the beta-testing of the survey instrument. This entailed reviewing the questionnaire and providing feedback on the structure and text of the questions. Seventeen Member States participated in the beta testing exercise. The responses received proved to be useful and valuable in refining and finalizing the questionnaire. For example, the preliminary responses and feedback highlighted the complexity and diversity of organizational structures in naming and mapping functions across Member States. This feedback enabled the joint expert group to revise the questionnaire to better capture the heterogeneity of organizational structures across Member States. The full survey was launched in February 2025, marking a significant milestone in promoting shared good practices among national mapping agencies and national names authorities worldwide. Member States were strongly encouraged to participate in the survey to ensure comprehensive and accurate results. The final report is expected to be presented at the fifteenth session of the Committee of Experts in August 2025.

Progress Report on the UNGEGN and UN-GGIM Collaborative Project: "Shared Good Practices between National Mapping Agencies and National Geographical Names Authorities"

I Introduction

1. The primary objective of the project is to enhance collaboration between national mapping agencies (NMAs) and national geographical names authorities (NNAs) by identifying, gathering, and documenting good practices that could inform and guide Member States in refining the coordination and efficiency of their organizations. By sharing effective strategies, the project aims to mitigate issues such as duplication of efforts, data inconsistencies, and inefficient resource utilization. This project is supported by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Both are intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC), as evidenced by decisions 12/114 and 3/2023/9 which emanated from their parliamentary sessions in 2022 and 2023 respectively. The project is being implemented by a joint expert group on geographical naming and geospatial information management that is co-chaired by Dr. Ade Komara Mulyana from the Geospatial Information Agency (*Badan Informasi Geospasial-BIG*) and Dr. Michael Tischler from the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Staff members from both organizations, the United States Census Bureau, and the UNGEGN secretariat are members of the joint expert group on geographical naming and geospatial information management, that was established to implement the collaborative project.

II Project Progress

2. Starting in June 2024, to the drafting of this report, the joint expert group has convened thirteen meetings. The meetings were regularly attended by representatives from BIG, the USGS, the United States Census Bureau, and the Chair of UNGEGN, and facilitated by the UN Statistics Division that serves as the UNGEGN secretariat. The meetings led to agreements on the specific goals of the project and initial implementation tasks, including developing a user-friendly questionnaire aligned with the project's objectives. The joint expert group identified several actions to be completed within fifteen months, including a broad preliminary review from interested member countries, revision of the questionnaire based on those replies, the formal release to all UN-GGIM and UNGEGN member countries, an analysis of the collected responses, and finally the compilation of results and trends into a final report. The project overview was introduced during a side event of the fourteenth session of the Committee of Experts, in August 2024. The final report is tentatively set to be presented at the fifteenth session of the Committee of Experts in August 2025, and this progress report will be presented at the 2025 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in April-May 2025.

3. During its regular meetings, the joint expert group discussed how best to structure the questionnaire to meet the goals of the project, enabling countries to provide useful information about their activities and facilitating the identification of good practices. The joint expert group decided that the nine strategic pathways of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) adopted by the Committee of Experts at its tenth session in 2020 was a useful framework which could be used to investigate the collaboration and organization of NMAs and NNAs. The nine strategic pathways of the UN-IGIF led to an approach that considered national circumstances, priorities, and perspectives as a means for governments to establish more effective

geospatial information management arrangements². The UN-IGIF pathways therefore represented ideal organizing principles that reflected the goals of this collaborative effort. As a result, a considerable number of questions were created to solicit good practices of Member States according to the strategic pathways of governance and institutions, policy and legal, financial, data, innovation, standards, partnerships, capacity and education, and community and engagement. An additional focus of the questions also included a better understanding of the involvement of indigenous groups in mapping and naming efforts.

4. The joint expert group when drafting the questions also took into consideration the feedback from ten Member States: Armenia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Jordan, New Zealand, Oman, the Russian Federation, and Saudi Arabia. This effort aligns with the content published in *UNGEEN Bulletin #67*, titled "*Good Practices Emerging from Relations Between National Mapping/Geospatial Data Management Agencies and Geographical Names Authorities*." In December 2024 the joint expert group issued a preliminary version of the questionnaire to UN-GGIM and UNGEEN member countries to solicit feedback and suggested edits to improve its value and usability. The initial beta testing exercise generated feedback on the questionnaire's structure from nine Member States: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Mexico, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Additionally, eight Member States including Belgium, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, the Czech Republic, and Vietnam participated in the beta testing exercise by completing the draft questionnaire. These responses were used as concrete examples to guide Member States in completing their questionnaires. These contributions were invaluable to the joint expert group in progressing from an initial draft of questions to a more flexible version that was better tailored to the complexities of institutional arrangements evidenced across Member States.

5. In the first two months of 2025, the joint expert group collaborated and generated six versions of the draft questionnaire, which integrated the feedback received from the beta testing exercise. Based on input from Member States, the joint expert group decided that the questionnaire should accommodate several options for institutional arrangements of mapping and geographic naming activities within each country. The final questionnaire consists of 10 sections. The Respondent Details and Institutional Arrangements section gathers respondent information and institutional structures, and guides participants to relevant sections. The Governance and Institutions section explores the relationship between naming and mapping activities, while the Policy and Legal section examines regulations, including legal frameworks supporting collaboration with indigenous groups. The Financial section assesses funding mechanisms for naming and mapping activities.

6. The Data section focuses on integrating naming data into mapping products and the relationship with private mapping platforms. The Innovation section highlights new technologies and methodologies that enhance collaboration in mapping and geographical naming. The Standards section addresses guidelines, challenges from a lack of standards, and compliance measures. The Partnerships section evaluates stakeholder engagement, while the Capacity and Education section reviews joint capacity-building initiatives. Lastly, the Communication and Engagement section examines public interaction, feedback mechanisms, and good

² United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. (2018). *Integrated geospatial information framework: Part 1 – Overarching strategic framework*. United Nations. <https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/8th-Session/documents/Part%201-IGIF-Overarching-Strategic-Framework-24July2018.pdf>.

III Expectations

8. As outlined in the timeline above, the project is now in the online survey phase, marked by the official letter sent by the UN Statistics Division, the UNGEGN Secretariat, to all UNGEGN and UN-GGIM Member States. The questionnaire should be completed by representatives from both the national names authority (NNA) and the national mapping agency (NMA) in each country by Wednesday 30 April 2025. If these entities operate within the same organization, a single joint response is encouraged. However, if they are separate organizations, at least two responses should be submitted. In cases where an NNA or NMA does not exist, representatives from the institution responsible for geographical naming or mapping activities may complete the questionnaire.

9. The joint expert group expects Member States to actively contribute to this project, enabling the formulation of good practices and recommendations for effective collaboration between naming and mapping authorities within a country. The joint expert group looks forward to reviewing all the responses following the conclusion of the submission period. The committee will analyze the results to determine commonalities and trends in the practices of NNAs and NMAs, particularly where Member States have identified those to be successful. The joint expert group expects to compile a final report summarizing their findings to be tabled at the fifteenth session of the Committee of Experts in August 2025.

Appendix

Questionnaire

Sharing Good Practices Between National Mapping Agencies and National Names Authorities Collaborative Project between UNGEGN and UN-GGIM

Below is a preview of the questionnaire created in Microsoft Forms. The questions below only provide an outline of the questionnaire. The actual questions may vary depending on the institutional arrangements for mapping and naming activities in each country.

1. Respondent Details

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Forms questionnaire with the following structure:

- Title:** Sharing Good Practices Between National Mapping Agencies and National Names Authorities
- Section 1: Personal Information**
 - Question 1:** Please enter your name * (Required). Answer: Andreas
 - Question 2:** Which country do you represent? * (Required). Answer: Indonesia
 - Question 3:** Which organization/institution do you represent? * (Required). Answer: sample
- Section 2: Email Address**
 - Question 4:** Please provide your email address * (Required). (Emails will be used solely for follow-up questions regarding submitted responses and for further correspondence). Answer field: Enter your answer
- Section 3: Representation**
 - Question 5:** Do you answer this questionnaire on behalf of? * (Required). If your country does not have a NNA or NMA, or if you do not represent either of them, please clarify your focus. For example, specify whether you are involved in mapping activities or naming activities.
 - National Names Authority (NNA)
 - National Mapping Agency (NMA)
 - Both
 - Other
- Navigation:** Back and Next buttons.

2. Governance and Institutions

Governance and Institutions

9

At what level is the relationship between the NMA/mapping activities and NNA/geographical naming activities? *

Technical (Collaboration without any legal framework)

Managerial (Inter-departmental collaboration within the institution)

Executive (Collaboration among different institutions)

Political (National level collaboration based on legal arrangements)

No Relationship

Other

10

Describe the roles and responsibilities between NMA/mapping activities and NNA/geographical naming activities. *

(For example: The NNA collects and standardizes geographical names, while the NMA applies them to the national map)

Enter your answer

3. Policy and Legal

Policy and Legal

11

Do you have policies or legislation that directs or supports collaboration between the NMA/mapping activities or NNA/geographical naming activities? *

Yes, Directly

Yes, Indirectly

No

12

Please describe the policies or legislation that directs or supports the collaboration between NMA/mapping activities or NNA/geographical naming activities

Enter your answer

13

Do the policies or legislation support the availability, accessibility, exchange, application, or management of geographical names or mapping data? *

Yes

No

14

Please provide more details to your answer

Enter your answer

15

Are there any Indigenous groups currently residing in your country? *

Yes

No

Do not know the answer

16

Do you have policies or guidelines for engaging with Indigenous groups in mapping or geographical naming activities? *

Yes

No

17

Please provide more details to your answer

Enter your answer

Back Next

4. Financial

Financial

18

What is the primary source of funding for NMA/mapping activities? *

- National/Central/Federal government
- Regional/State/Provincial government
- Local government
- Business/ industries
- None
- Prefer not to disclose the information
- Other

19

What is the primary source of funding for NNA/geographical naming activities? *

- National/Central/Federal government
- Regional/State/Provincial government
- Local government
- Business/ industries
- None
- Prefer not to disclose the information
- Other

20

How are collaborations between NMA/mapping activities and NNA/geographical naming activities funded? *

- Both fund their own activities
- Funding comes from the lead mapping or naming agencies
- Funding comes from a mix of various jurisdictions, including National/Central/Federal, Regional/State/Provincial, and Local levels)
- No funds dedicated for collaborations
- No information

21

What financial challenges do you encounter in sustaining collaborative efforts?

Enter your answer

Back
Next

5. Data

Data

20

Describe the process for integrating geographical names data into national mapping products, and vice-versa *

Enter your answer

21

How do you ensure data accuracy and consistency across geographical names and mapping datasets?

Enter your answer

22

How do you resolve discrepancies or conflicts in geographical names data and mapping products?

Enter your answer

23

What metadata standards are utilized to ensure data quality and usability in collaborations between the NMA/mapping activities and NNA/geographical naming activities? *

Enter your answer

24

Do you have a legal arrangement or policy to ensure consistency of maps or geographical names data with private mapping platforms? *

Yes

No

25

Please describe the process for ensuring consistency of map products and geographical names data with private mapping platforms in your country.

Enter your answer

Back Next

6. Innovation

Innovation

26

What innovative technologies or methodologies enhance collaboration between mapping and geographical naming activities?
(example: the use of API for the integration of geographical names data into mapping products)

Enter your answer

27

Can you provide examples of pilot projects or case studies showcasing innovation in your collaborative efforts?

Enter your answer

28

What role does research and development play in the collaboration between the NMA/mapping activities and NNA/geographical naming activities in your country?

Enter your answer

Back Next

7. Standards

Standards

29

Are national or international standards used in collaborative geographical names and mapping activities? *

Yes

No

30

What national or international standards guide your collaborative geographical names and mapping activities? *

Enter your answer

31

How do you ensure compliance with these standards?
(Example: Giving rewards to the parties that have been implementing the standards) *

Enter your answer

32

What challenges do you face in implementing and adhering to these standards collaboratively? *

Enter your answer

Back Next

8. Partnerships

Partnerships

33

Which group(s) are frequent partners to NMA/mapping activities? *

- National level institutions
- Regional/State/Province institutions
- Local governments
- Private industry
- Academia
- Non-profit organizations
- Public
- No partnership
- Not sure to answer
- Other

34

Which group(s) are frequent partners to NNA/geographical naming activities? *

- National level institutions
- Regional/State/Province institutions
- Local governments
- Private industry
- Academia
- Non-profit organizations
- Public
- No partnership
- Not sure to answer
- Other

35

Please list the specific frequent partners (e.g.: Ministry of Home Affairs, Statistical Office, Navy, etc.)
 Note: If you choose "No partnership" or "Not sure to answer", please fill (-)

Enter your answer

36

Are Indigenous groups involved in your mapping efforts? *

Yes

No

There are no Indigenous groups

37

How often do you invite Indigenous groups to participate your mapping activities? 

Annually

Monthly

Quarterly

Incidental only

Other

38

Please describe how you engage or consult with Indigenous groups in mapping activities.

(Example: the involvement of Indigenous groups in restoring original place names from their native languages or in boundary mapping)

Enter your answer

39

Are Indigenous groups involved in your geographical naming efforts? *

Yes

No

40

How often do you invite Indigenous groups to participate your geographical naming activities? 

Annually

Monthly

Quarterly

Incidental only

Other

41

Please describe how you engage or consult with Indigenous groups in geographical naming activities.

(Example: the involvement of Indigenous groups in restoring original place names from their native languages or in boundary mapping)

Enter your answer

42

What approach(es) do NMA/mapping activities or NNA/geographical naming activities use to involve stakeholders? *

- Academic Conferences
- Industry/Trade Conference
- Hosted workshops and webinars
- Websites
- Blogs
- Social Media
- Not sure to answer
- Other

43

Do the current approaches have an positive impact on building good partnerships with stakeholders? *

- Yes
- No
- Not sure to answer

44

Have you implemented any public-private partnerships in geographical naming or mapping activities? *

- Yes
- No
- Not sure to answer

45

Please describe your public-private partnership efforts

Enter your answer

9. Capacity and Education

Capacity and Education

46

Is there any joint capacity-building or education program between the NMA/mapping activities and NNA/geographical naming activities? *

Yes

No

47

Please list any joint capacity-building or education programs.

Enter your answer

48

What challenges do you face in building or maintaining your joint program? (if any)

Enter your answer

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10. Communication and Engagement

Communication and Engagement

49

Do you have mechanisms for public consultation and feedback for NMA/mapping activities?
(Example: Using the official map portal to collect public feedback on changes in land use and land cover) *

Yes

No

Do not know the answer

50

Please describe the ways in which you engage with the public
(Example: using social media to promote new mapping products) *

Enter your answer

51

How do you measure the effectiveness of your communication and engagement efforts related to mapping activities?
(Example: Using the official map portal to collect public feedback on changes in land use and land cover)

Enter your answer

52

Do you have processes in place for public consultation and feedback regarding NNA/geographical naming activities?
(Example: Using the official naming website to collect public feedback before standardizing names) *

Yes

No

Do not know the answer

53

Please describe the ways in which you engage with the public
(Example: using social media to promote naming activities) *

Enter your answer

54

How do you measure the effectiveness of your communication and engagement efforts related to geographical naming activities?
(Example: through surveys or statistical report from social media engagement)

Enter your answer

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11. Closing

Closing for NNA & NMA with relationship

55

What benefits have you observed from integrating geographical names and mapping activities? *

Avoiding duplication of resources and work effort

Increased efficiency

Common understanding of mapping and naming process

Recognition of resources required

Updates occur more quickly

Improved information exchange

Consolidation of IT architecture

Other

56

Please choose area(s) for improvement in collaborating between the NMA/mapping activities and NNA/geographical naming activities? *

Standards

Communication

Redundant products

Data management

Information sharing

Workflows

Difficulty in public access to information

No improvement needed

Other

57

Please provide more details.
Note: If you chose "No improvement needed" or "Other", please fill (-) *

Enter your answer

57

Please provide more details.
Note: If you chose "No improvement needed" or "Other", please fill (-) *

Enter your answer

58

What practices do you follow that you would like to highlight as Best Practices for others?

Enter your answer

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