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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

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 progress[1]. 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 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

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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.