



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 February 2025

Original: English

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

2025 session

New York, 28 April–2 May 2025

Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Technical expertise: geographical names data management

World Geographical Names database

Summary**

The World Geographical Names database of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names is a repository of the short and full names of countries (193 Member States and two non-member States with observer status) and their capitals and cities in a multilingual, multiscriptal and georeferenced format. Authoritative city endonyms are provided mainly by national names authorities, and sound files are being added to assist users with pronunciation. The database currently contains toponyms, including endonyms and exonyms, of features comprising more than 2,700 country names, some 12,000 names for 9,850 cities and more than 970 audio files. Toponymic data at the country level complement this information.

During the intersessional period, the Secretariat has worked to implement Economic and Social Council decision 2023/337, which was based on recommendation 2 of the 2023 session. This work has consisted, primarily, of reviewing existing data in the database and working with the Group of Experts to resolve linguistic, geographical and other data quality issues. Looking beyond the current session, the Secretariat hopes to initiate a participatory and inclusive consultation with Member States' national names authorities, national geospatial information agencies or other institutions responsible for authoritative geographical names, to better reflect the global toponymic landscape.

The full report details the activities of the Secretariat in the ongoing implementation of the database, including the development of the unique identifier concept and its review by the United Nations Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information; a data review and integration with other internationally available authoritative datasets, such as the Demographic Yearbook and the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database; the definition of a set of recommendations designed to improve the geographic coverage of the database that will be implemented by requesting Member States to provide toponymic

* [GEGN.2/2025/1](#).

** The full report was prepared by the Secretariat. The report will be available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th_session_2025/, in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2025/21/CRP.21.



data; and the introduction of a report that explores the role of semantic web technologies in the context of the database.

The report also includes a discussion of avenues for the future expansion of the database, including the potential for including toponyms of Indigenous and other geographies and integration with the second administrative level boundaries programme. The Secretariat recommends that, as a first step, this work should be underpinned by collaboration with the Working Groups on Geographical Names Data Management, Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage and Romanization Systems. This work could then be expanded to include other actors in the broader global geospatial information ecosystem, including the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and the United Nations Geospatial Network, with a view to increasing awareness of the database and the work of the Group of Experts, in general.
