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**Culture, heritage and language recognition: geographical
names as culture, heritage and identity**

Role of geographical names in safeguarding cultural heritage in Saudi Arabia

Summary**

Geographical names in Saudi Arabia play an essential role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. These names, often deeply connected to the country's history, religion and environment, are more than labels for places; they are symbols of identity, tradition and collective memory that safeguard the cultural richness of the nation.

Many of the geographical names in Saudi Arabia carry historical and cultural significance. For instance, Diriyah symbolizes the origin of the Saudi State and its unification, while Al-Ula calls to mind the ancient Nabataean civilization and the region's archaeological treasures. Such sacred sites as Makkah, Madinah, Badr and Mount Uhud resonate with Islamic heritage and serve as timeless reminders of the country's role as the cradle of Islam. The place name Al-Hasa evokes pivotal moments in history and reliance on natural resources like oases.

These names also reflect the geographical diversity of Saudi Arabia and the cultural traditions tied to its landscapes. For example, Thaimah and Al-Jouf recall ancient trade routes and early settlements that shaped the country's historical trajectory.

The Government has taken significant steps to protect this heritage through initiatives by the Ministry of Culture, the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information and the National Committee on Geographical Names. These efforts include the documentation and standardization of geographical names, as well as the creation of a national database and geographical names portal. Such measures

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

** The full report was prepared by Talal Alshafaey (Saudi Arabia), General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information. 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.2/2025/47/CRP.47.



ensure that these cultural assets remain preserved amid the pressures of modernization and urbanization.

Moreover, geographical names serve as a foundation for cultural tourism and academic research. Such destinations as Diriyah and Al-Ula attract visitors from around the world, showcasing the historical richness of Saudi Arabia and promoting its identity on the international stage. These names also safeguard intangible heritage, such as oral traditions and folklore, keeping the stories of the past alive for future generations.

In conclusion, geographical names in Saudi Arabia are more than just identifiers of places; they are vital custodians of the country's cultural heritage. They connect the present with the past, strengthen national pride and contribute to the nation's cultural and historical legacy. By preserving geographical names, Saudi Arabia ensures that its rich identity endures for generations to come.
