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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names****2025 session**

New York, 28 April–2 May 2025

Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Culture, heritage and language recognition: exonyms****Proposal for a resolution on exonyms and cultural heritage****Summary\*\***

Reports entitled “Quatre types d’exonymes” (GEGN.2/2021/56/CRP.56/Rev.3) and “Exonyms as part of the cultural heritage” (GEGN.2/2021/73/CRP.73) were presented at the 2021 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, which was held online from 3 to 7 May 2021. In response to those reports, in which the value of exonyms was acknowledged, the Group of Experts adopted decision 2/2021/12. In paragraph (c) of that decision, it decided to conduct further discussions on finding guidelines that reconciled the current resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names on exonyms and its acknowledgement of exonyms as part of the cultural heritage. In addition, the Group, in paragraph (b) of its decision 3/2023/16, decided that there was a need to issue a recommendation, for consideration at its 2025 session, that reconciled the resolutions of the Conference on exonyms and its acknowledgement of exonyms as part of cultural heritage.

There were intensive discussions regarding the topic at the twenty-fourth meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms, which was held in Ljubljana in 2022, at the 2023 session of the Group of Experts, in New York, and at the twenty-sixth meeting of the Working Group, which was held in Prague in 2024. The draft resolution has been reviewed and edited many times. The Working Group, in a virtual meeting held on 27 January 2025, came to an agreement on the following draft resolution on exonyms and cultural heritage:

**Exonyms and cultural heritage***The Group of Experts,*

*Recalling* that United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names resolutions 1972/II/28, 1972/II/29, 1977/III/18, 1982/IV/20, 1987/V/13 and 2002/VIII/4 all recommend a reduction in the use of exonyms,

\* GEGN.2/2025/1.

\*\* The full report was prepared by Kohei Watanabe, Convener of the Working Group on Exonyms. The report will be available at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th\\_session\\_2025/](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th_session_2025/), in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2025/72/CRP.72.

*Recalling also* that Conference resolutions 1987/V/6, 2002/VIII/9 and 2012/X/3 consider geographical names to form part of a nation's cultural heritage and that resolution 2007/IX/4 affirms that they fall within the concept of intangible cultural heritage as understood in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 17 October 2003, which calls for the safeguarding of "oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage",

*Recognizing* that exonyms are a function of language and include many geographical names that form living and vital parts of individual languages,

*Recommends*, while recognizing the principle of avoiding the use of exonyms that could be considered contentious, including those with the potential to give rise to international problems, as well as the precedence of official national forms, that a judicious and contextual use of exonyms should be respected where these form living and vital parts of individual languages.

The report provides information on how the draft resolution was prepared, discussed and revised and includes a recommendation that the Group of Experts adopt the draft resolution as set out in the report.

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