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## 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**

### Concept of a globally unique identifier for cities

#### Summary\*\*

The Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has drafted a position paper on the concept of a globally unique identifier for cities.

In the position paper, it is noted that, although there are several unique identifier systems for countries (including the Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 3166 standards), there is presently no agreed unique identifier system for cities. Thus, by examining good practices in data management, the principles of linked data and other relevant concepts through the lens of geographical names, factors related to developing a unique identifier for cities are discussed and proposals are made for the establishment of such an identifier, under the oversight and operationalization of the Statistics Division.

Guided by recommendation 2 and decision 3/2023/17 of the 2023 session of the Group of Experts, the Working Group has exchanged views on a globally unique identifier for cities with the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, as the group mandated for the overall coordination of the integration of statistical and geospatial information reporting to both the Statistical Commission and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. Following deliberations with the Working Group, the Expert Group welcomed the paper and approved the proposal to pilot the development of a unique identifier based on the Uniform Resource Identifier or the Universally Unique Identifier approach, in alignment with the mandates from the Statistical Commission and the Committee of Experts.

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

\*\* The full report was prepared by Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu (Germany) on behalf of the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management. 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.2/2025/84/CRP.84.



The concept of a globally unique identifier for cities was shared with the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management at its fourteenth session, in August 2024, and received positive feedback. The Expert Group intends to share the concept and report on the progress of this collaboration to the Statistical Commission at its fifth-seventh session, in 2026. In that respect, the development of a unique identifier for cities will further support the harmonization of diverse data sets across geographies, supporting national and international comparability of geospatially integrated statistics, including those relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals and their indicators.

The report provides an outline of how the development of a globally unique identifier for cities will strengthen localization efforts under the Sustainable Development Goals, which will enhance the ability of producers of geospatially integrated statistical data to disaggregate statistics by geography and, in turn, support policymakers in, inter alia, targeting interventions more effectively, addressing inequities and monitoring progress at a more granular and local level.

The Group of Experts is invited to adopt the concept of a unique identifier for cities and to support the request for the Statistics Division to pilot the development of a unique identifier within the World Geographical Names database. The database will provide a reliable and extendable technical platform through which authoritative toponymic data can be managed and integrated across the United Nations.

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