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English

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

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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Reports: Divisions of the Group of Experts

Report of the United States of America-Canada Division

Submitted by the USA-Canada Division

Summary **

The United States of America (USA)-Canada Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), co-chaired by the USA and Canada, held several virtual meetings in 2023-2024 to discuss shared topics of interest in geographical naming. Notably, the Division welcomed a new Co-chair in 2024: Shellie Zahniser, U.S. Board on Geographic Names Executive Secretary, Domestic Names Committee. The full report contains an overview of the joint activities undertaken by the Division and a summary of its general discussions.

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Report of the USA-Canada Division

Background

The USA-Canada Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) is comprised of the national geographical naming authorities of each country. The purpose of the Division is to discuss topics of mutual interest related to geographical naming. The Division is co-chaired by the Executive Secretaries of the United States Board on Geographic Names (U.S. BGN) and the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC).

The Division has previously hosted events to bring together state, federal, provincial and territorial naming authorities in both countries. This includes two successful virtual forums to foster discussion on geographical names (2022) and explore approaches to the treatment of derogatory names (2023), with broad participation from the memberships of both naming boards.

Activities during the intersessional period

Regular virtual meetings were held between Division co-chairs and a small U.S. BGN and GNBC coordination team in 2023 and 2024. Discussions focused on sharing information regarding topics such as Indigenous geographical names and approaches to derogatory geographical names, as well as coordinating engagement with regards to relevant national and international events and activities, such as UNGEGN and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM).

In April 2024, the USA-Canada Division presented a summary of the Division and its activities at an UNGEGN Bureau and Divisional Meeting.

In June 2024, the Division welcomed a new Co-chair: Shellie Zahniser, U.S. Board on Geographic Names Executive Secretary, Domestic Names Committee. Members of the USA-Canada Division also attended a meeting of the Canada-led, UNGEGN Focus Group on Indigenous Geographical Names in November 2024.

Conclusion

While the jurisdictions and processes for geographical naming differ between the United States and Canada, there is an opportunity for collaboration and knowledge sharing between the naming authorities for each country.