

## A. Decision for adoption by the Council

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following:

### Decision 1

- (a) Takes note of the report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its 2025 session (E/2025/xx);
- (b) Decides that the 2027 session of the Group of Experts shall be held from xx April to xx May 2027;
- (c) Approves the provisional agenda of the 2027 session (GEGN.2/2023/L.1).

## B. Decisions brought to the attention of the Council

2. The following decisions adopted by the Group of Experts are brought to the attention of the Council:

### Decision 4/2025/1

#### **Advancing geographical names standardization through inclusive, culturally-informed and evidence-based solutions:**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Welcomed the theme of its 2025 session, "Advancing geographical names standardization through Inclusive, culturally-Informed, and evidence-based solutions to support sustainable development";
- (b) Further welcomed the convening of the panel discussion on the same theme, noting with appreciation the interests and diverse viewpoints expressed by the five panelists;
- (c) Recognized the efforts of Member States to align the standardization of geographical names with the focuses of inclusivity, culturally-informed approaches, and evidence-based decision-making, as reported during the session; and
- (d) Encouraged Member States to report further developments made under these three focuses in future sessions.

### Decision 4/2025/2

#### **Item 3(a, b) Reports of the Bureau and the Secretariat**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the report of the Chair and the report of the Secretariat, and appreciated the work of the Chair, the Bureau and the Working Group Convenors and the support from the Secretariat and the Statistics Division in arranging and preparing for the 2025 session;
- (b) decides to request a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs on the following questions:
  - Is it in line with the Rules of Procedure of ECOSOC and of the Group of Experts to call the outcomes and conclusions of the Group of Expert "decisions" and "resolutions", whereby resolutions reflect the technical consensus reached by the Group of Experts and do not require ECOSOC final approval?
  - If the above-mentioned terminology would not be in line with the Rules of Procedure of the Group of Experts, what would be the correct

denomination of conclusions by the Group, especially those sent to ECOSOC and those not sent to ECOSOC?

- What is the legal status of the conclusions taken by the Group of Experts, endorsed by ECOSOC or not, with regard to the 211 resolutions of the past 11 United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (existing until 2017) and the Group's own "decisions"/"recommendations" since 2019. Under what conditions can the Group of Experts amend or repeal decisions and resolutions of the old body and of its own, explicitly or implicitly?

(c) Renewed the call expressed in Decision 3/2023//2 for the organization of an appropriate framework to support the strengthening or creation of national names authorities as well as a Group of Experts trust fund.

#### **Decision 4/2025/3**

##### **Item 3(c) Strategic Plan and Programme of Work**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report of the Vice-Chair and welcomed his assessment of how the Bureau, Working Groups, Coordinators and Divisions of UNGEGN, and Member States have facilitated the implementation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029, and, in that regard, called for the Group of Experts to accelerate its efforts in delivering a comprehensive and inclusive programme on the standardization of geographical names;

(b) Reaffirmed that the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029 would continue to serve as a guiding framework for the Group of Experts and for geographical names standardization of Member States;

(c) Accepted the amendments proposed by the Bureau as detailed in the background document to the report (GEGN.2/2025/161/CRP.161/Add.1), and supported appropriate measures to revitalize necessary frameworks;

(d) Encouraged the Bureau, Working Groups, Coordinators, Divisions, and Member States to contribute to the ongoing implementation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work;

(e) Began analyzing the current Strategic Plan and Programme of Work to inform the development of the next Strategic Plan and Programme of Work for discussion at the 2027 session;

#### **Decision 4/2025/4**

##### **Item 4(a) Reports: Divisions of the Group of Experts**

The Group of Experts:

a) Took note of the report of the Bureau and Secretariat and the reports submitted by Divisions;

(b) Requested the Bureau to continue convening biannual virtual meetings with the Divisional Chairs to foster coordination, to facilitate the communication between the Bureau and Divisions, to facilitate the development and provision by the Bureau of common tools to support the work of the Divisions, and to encourage active participation of Divisions in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021-2029.

(c) Encouraged Member States to participate in divisional activities and to revitalize inactive Divisions, and reminded that a country may belong to several divisions, and also a dependent territory under the cover of the relevant country;

(d) Deferred for reworking and resubmission at the 2027 session the guidelines for the creation and dissolution of Divisions proposed by the report of the Bureau and Secretariat;

**Decision 4/2025/5**

**Item 4(b) Reports of Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of reports submitted by 50 countries under this agenda item and expressed appreciation for the thematic consideration and presentations of those reports in the form of a national dialogue addressed throughout the session;
- (b) Noted that the reports covered themes including national names standardisation processes, cultural aspects of geographical names such as Indigenous and minority names, technology and toponymic databases and inter-governmental and inter-organisational cooperation, promotion and training on geographical names and encouraged experts to refer to the full national reports.

**Decision 4/2025/6**

**Item 4(c) Activities on the standardization of geographical names in Africa**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Urged the many African countries that have not yet set up geographical name management structures to do likewise;
- (b) Noted with regret that the position of coordinator of the Task Team for Africa has remained vacant since the 2023 session, and emphasized the need to increase the participation of African States in the work of Group of Experts;
- (c) Requested the Chair, the Bureau and the Working Group on Funding and Training in Toponymy with the support of the Secretariat to revitalise the Task Team for Africa in liaison with the Economic Commission for Africa.
- (d) Welcomed the convening of the special meeting for African Member States and acknowledged their many geographical names standardization policy, organizational and technical challenges that needs to be addressed
- (e) Encouraged African Member States to strengthen cross border collaboration in names collection exercises and sharing of methods and practices for geographical names standardization.
- (f) Agreed to adopt a systematic approach to support African Member States by
  - a. Identifying and prioritizing the needs to be addressed,
  - b. Working on actionable items grouped within the long, medium and short term, leveraging the support of the Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy

**Decision 4/2025/7**

**Item 4(d) National and international meetings and conferences**  
**National and international meetings and conferences**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the reports;
- (b) Welcomed the adoption of a strategic plan for the Arabic Division and a number of related decisions and recommendations, consistent with the Group of Experts Strategic Plan in 2024.

**Decision 4/2025/8**

**Item 5(a) Technical expertise: Names collection, office treatment, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the reports;
- (b) Appreciated the inclusion of topics such as the application of AI tools for standardization tasks; the interplay between use, meaning and origin in traditional narratives; name collection and standardization in desert environments; sharing a 'Manual for The Collection of Geographical Names' covering the end-to-end process; recognizing legal and administrative challenges associated with variations and inconsistencies in current standardization practice, and in this regard:
  - a. Encouraged ongoing discussion between participating Member States under the Working Group on Romanisation and suggested consultation with local authorities, to address the challenges with collecting geographical names;
  - b. Requested the support of the Bureau and the Secretariat to support workshops for Member States requiring assistance with standardization practices;

**Decision 4/2025/9**

**Item 5(b) Technical expertise: Geographical names data management**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Welcomed the information made available, the active participation and the efforts undertaken by Member States to inform on and enhance geographical names data management;
- (b) Took note of the reports and affirmed the support for strategy 1, Technical expertise, of the Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029, and the willingness of Member States to participate and contribute to the action items identified within the Programme of Work;
- (c) Acknowledged the importance of the integration of unique identifiers and cross-referencing systems for evidence-based standardization, the usage of Artificial Intelligence and the exploration of how digital platforms can serve multiple user groups;
- (d) Appreciated the redevelopment of the World Geographical Names Database (WGND) as a reliable and extendable technical platform and requested the Secretariat to work with Member States and entities of the United Nations system to integrate authoritative sources of geographical and toponymic data at the country and city levels;
- (e) Requested Member States to provide standardized geographical names to the Secretariat to ensure that the World Geographic Names Database is operationalized as a practical mechanism for implementing the Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Theme “Geographical Names” for Member States and the United Nations system;

(f) Urged Member States to mobilise resources to support the development of capacity across all Member States and welcomed the possibility of convening a workshop on Linking Geographic Names, the Disaggregation and Localisation of SDGs, and the Semantic Web 11-15 August 2025 at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile;

(g) Adopted the concept for a Universal Unique Identifier for Cities as detailed in the document “The development of a globally unique identifier for Cities” and requested the United Nations Statistics Division to implement the concept within the WGND as a consistent and reliable unique identifier for cities;

#### **Decision 4/2025/10**

##### **Item 5(c) Technical expertise: Writing systems and pronunciation**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the reports on aspects relating to writing systems and to pronunciation;

(b) Noted with appreciation the significant advances on the innovative tools that had been developed on romanization and agreed to continue to investigate such methods to be used for romanization;

(c) Noted the work on transliteration of non-Roman script writing systems, including on the proposals regarding the unification of Arabic transliteration, and encouraged Member States to continue such projects and share their progress with the Working Group on Romanization Systems;

(d) Noted the innovative progress on audio files that had been used for the collection of pronunciation of Māori names, and encourage the Group of Experts to share similar pronunciation activities;

(e) Encouraged all Member States to continue to share ongoing work with the Working Group on Romanization Systems towards further implementation of existing United Nations romanization systems and the development of systems to be considered for approval as United Nations romanization systems.

#### **Decision 4/2025/11**

##### **Item 5(d) Technical expertise: Toponymic terminology**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology and welcomed the progress made with the online terminology database;

(b) Adopted the two new terms and the change to the definition of one in the terminology database;

(c) Urged Member States to mobilize resources to submit and update changes in the terminology database;

(d) Acknowledged the importance of the working group in advancing standardizing toponymic terminology to facilitate consistent international communication about geographical names and urged the Working group to consider establishing a new convenor.

#### **Decision 4/2025/12**

##### **Item 5(e) Technical expertise: Country names**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the report presented by the coordinator of the list of country names;
- (b) Approved the list of country names as submitted to the session.

**Decision 4/2025/13**

**Item 6(a) Relationships, links and connections: Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of two reports covering progress on activities such as the establishment of a new and enlarged Secretariat for the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and establishing United Nations Global Geospatial Centers of excellence in China, Germany and Saudi Arabia, and the collaborative project;
- (b) Thanked Indonesia and the United States of America for leading the collaboration project;
- (c) Invited views on the efforts to strengthen collaboration in furthering the standardisation of geographical names;
- (d) Supported the report on the collaborative project of the joint expert group to the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management to be presented in August 2025, informed by analysis and collation of the questionnaire results amongst other initiatives;
- (e) Welcomed the future publication of the compendium of good practices and recommendations for effective collaboration between mapping and naming authorities within a country, intending to actively support those recommendations;

**Decision 4/2025/14**

**Item 6(c) Relationships, links and connections: International organizations, including academia**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the reports;
- (b) Recognised the active approach that each group has taken in developing programmes that positively affect standardization outcomes across the globe, and how these might be enforced;
- (c) Encouraged Member States to become familiar with the resources offered by these groups, providing understanding and promotion of standardized geographical names, with a view to becoming members of the groups;
- (d) Noted the efforts made to spread the knowledge on geographical names and to foster geographical and cartographic research in toponymy.

**Decision 4/2025/15 - Effective work programmes**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Welcomed the efforts of Member States and experts in implementing the resolutions, recommendations, and decisions from past Conferences and sessions, and in developing new frameworks for this purpose;
- (b) Appreciated the progress made by the Coordinator for Evaluation, Implementation, and Publicity in monitoring the implementation of resolutions and recommendations, as well as in maintaining and optimizing the use of UNGEGN resources;

- (c) Reaffirmed that the standardization of geographical names in support of sustainable development would bring economic and social benefits, recognized the good practices achieved in this regard; and requested Member States, the Coordinator for Evaluation, Implementation, and Publicity, and experts to continue their efforts towards this goal
- (d) Welcomed the recent updates to the inventory of toponymic guidelines and their dissemination through the UNGEGN website;
- (e) Urged Member States to prepare new guidelines or update existing ones and report to the Group of Experts at its subsequent sessions;

**Decision 4/2025/16**

**Item 8(a) Culture, heritage and language recognition: Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Acknowledged the important work conducted by Member States, including the development of guidelines, and thanked them for their efforts;
- (b) Noted the importance of public engagement and awareness as a means of safeguarding geographical names as cultural heritage, and using geographical names as a tool to bring about positive social change;
- (c) Supported the work of the revitalized Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage, noting its Terms of Reference and Work Plan
- (d) Requested Member States to answer the Global Survey and to consider participating in the revitalized Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage;
- (e) Welcomed Australia and Iceland as co-convenors of the revitalized Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage.

**Decision 4/2025/17**

**Item 8(b) Culture, heritage and language recognition: Indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Noted and commended the work undertaken by Member States and by the Focus Group on Indigenous Geographical Names, especially activities and initiatives linked to the United Nation's Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032, and urged them to continue this work,
- (b) Noted and appreciated efforts by Member States to standardize Indigenous and minority language geographical names;
- (c) Requested the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage, with the assistance of the Bureau, to formalize relationships with other relevant entities of the United Nations system, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization;
- (d) Decided to appoint the University of Latvia Livonian Institute to act as a liaison officer to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages Global Task Force, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Group of Experts;

**Decision 4/2025/18**

**Item 8(c) Culture, heritage and language recognition: Exonyms**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports and appreciated the work on exonyms conducted by the Group of Experts.

(b) Reaffirmed decision 2/2021/12, as well as 3/2023/16 that stated a need to issue a recommendation that reconciles the resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names on exonyms and its acknowledgement of exonyms as part of cultural heritage; and appreciated the work and deliberation conducted by the experts since 2021 towards achieving this.

(c) Agreed that further discussion on the matter remains necessary to fulfill the need as described in decision 3/2023/16.

(d) Encouraged Experts to consider the previous work of the Working Group on exonyms and to appreciate the concepts as well as the various concerns that were addressed in the process of developing the draft.

**Decision 4/2025/19**

**Item 9(a) Promotion and capacity-building: Strengthening publicity and increasing awareness of the importance of standardized geographical names**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the innovative approaches by member states to promote public awareness of standardized geographical names through social media, competitions, encyclopedias, and multimedia content;

(b) Encouraged Member States to continue developing inclusive, culturally informed approaches to geographical names documentation and standardization, with particular emphasis on leveraging digital tools to engage younger generations.

**Decision 4/2025/20**

**Item 9(b) Promotion and capacity-building: Toponymic training and education**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the significant educational gap relating to professionals lack of formal training in geographical names management, and requested the support of the Bureau and the Secretariat to implement efficient training models combining in-person workshops with online resources, prioritizing database management, standardization principles, and cultural heritage aspects.

(b) Noted the development of the Terms of Reference designed to guide the Working Group's activities

**Decision 4/2025/21**

**Item 9(c) Promotion and capacity-building: Funding of capacity-building initiatives**

The Group of Experts:

(a) Noted with regret the steady decrease in member states' contributions to the Group of Experts, limiting support for experts from developing countries attending sessions and organizing training.

(b) Decided to recommend the establishment of a Trust Fund to enhance training frameworks and address the funding challenges that



impact the Group of Expert's mission of building capacity in geographical names standardization across all regions and attendance in its activities.

**Decision 4/2025/22**

**Item 10 Other geographical names issues.**

*[Pending from the Chair]*