



# UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Advancing geographical names standardization through inclusive, culturally-informed and evidence-based solutions to support sustainable development

2025 Session | 28 April – 2 May 2025 | @UNSD\_GEGN, #2025UNGEGN



**Agenda Item Number: items 4 (d) and 9 (a)**

**Agenda Item Title: 4 (d) National and international meetings and conferences and 9 (a) Promotion and capacity-building: Strengthening publicity and increasing awareness of the importance of standardized geographical names**

**Title of paper/report: “International Seminar on Sea Names, 2023-2024” and “Bringing place names to the public: Creating promotional videos and infographics in the Republic of Korea”**

**Statement/intervention provided by: Japan**

**Statement/intervention:**

Japan has been actively supporting the work of UNGEGN and reiterates its respect towards the technical and academic nature of UNGEGN. UNGEGN is a forum for technical discussions and not for political issues. Japan supports its aim to promote discussion on the standardization of geographical names through technical contributions.

In this sense, it is regrettable that the reports [GEGN.2/2025/163/CRP.163](#) and [GEGN.2/2025/166/CRP.166](#) submitted by the Republic of Korea contain some political elements to question the internationally established name of “Sea of Japan”.

Let us recall that “Sea of Japan” is the only internationally established name for the sea area bordered mainly by Japan, Russia and the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. From the viewpoint of toponymy, it should be noted that “Sea of Japan”, or “*Mer du Japon*”, has, since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, been used as the precedent toponym, pre-dating any internationally established name, by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia, and it became the internationally established name in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, the United Nations recognized the name “Sea of Japan” as the standard geographical term in March 2004, and the UN, as well as other international organizations, have consistently used the name “Sea of Japan”.

In this regard, the fact that international seminar that the Republic of Korea refers to in its report erroneously indicate Sea of Japan as “disputed names” is incompatible with the fact that the Sea of Japan is the only internationally established name for this sea area and goes against the on-going standardization of geographical names, which is the main purpose of the UNGEGN. Allowing the Republic of Korea to continue to claim the dual naming of the internationally established name, Sea of Japan, and a domestically-used name in international fora could inspire others to make factually and academically unfounded claims suggesting other dual naming, thereby multiplying potential confusions on geographical names. Confusion over geographical names would necessarily have an adverse effect on the safety of international maritime traffic and would slow down the standardization. It is regrettable that the Republic of Korea has been organizing a seminar which includes the reference to “Sea of Japan” under disputed names and discussion on that theme. Presenting such materials at the UNGEGN totally goes against the technical nature of this body.

Furthermore, the use or introduction of promotional materials aiming to give wrong impression of the only internationally established name to the UNGEGN by the Republic of Korea contradicts



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the technical nature of this forum and is not appropriate.

Japan would like to request the Republic of Korea to respect the technical nature of the UNGEGN and refrain from presenting political elements in the current and future sessions of the UNGEGN.

Submitted on:

4/28/2025

**STATEMENT/INTERVENTION**