



Economic and Social Council

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Agenda item 18 (i)

Economic and environmental questions: geospatial information

Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its 2021 session

(virtual session, 3–7 May 2021)

Summary

The 2021 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was held from 3 to 7 May 2021, using a virtual platform, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2018/2](#) and decision 2021/213.

The present report describes the activities during the session and presents the major findings of the Group of Experts, focusing primarily on the importance of its work to support Member States in the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names and the establishment of national names authorities.



I. Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

A. Recommendations for adoption by the Council

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

Recommendation 1

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Recalls its decision 2019/230 of 23 July 2019, by which it decided that the Bureau of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names should undertake the development of a draft strategic plan and programme of work for the new Group of Experts, and notes that the Bureau of the Group of Experts has taken into consideration and fulfilled all the conditions as requested in decision 2019/230, including conducting three global consultations and a virtual webinar prior to the second session of the Group of Experts;

(b) Welcomes the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names strategic plan and programme of work 2021–2029 submitted to the Group of Experts and adopted at its second session;

(c) Approves the adoption of the strategic plan and programme of work, recognizing that it is a living document, with the provision that it shall be evaluated periodically by the Group of Experts for its implementation and updated and amended as appropriate and when necessary;

(d) Encourages the Bureau of the Group of Experts to assess its structure of subsidiary bodies to allow for efficiency in the implementation of the strategic plan and programme of work, and if needed, propose its reorganization;

(e) Encourages Member States, divisions, working groups and task teams of the Group of Experts to report on their activities to implement the strategic plan and programme of work at the sessions of the Group of Experts.

Recommendation 2

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Recalls that in its resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, the General Assembly called for intergovernmental bodies and forums of the Economic and Social Council to reflect the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the interlinkages between them;

(b) Also recalls General Assembly resolution [72/305](#) of 23 July 2018 on the review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution [68/1](#) on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, in which the Assembly emphasized that the Council should aim at creating synergy and coherence in its work to ensure efficiency and effectiveness and that it should ensure harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of its subsidiary bodies, while ensuring that the principles, critical aspects and implementation gaps of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development are addressed;

(c) Acknowledges that there are numerous elements of geographical names standardization with potential connections to the natural environment;

(d) Recognizes that the work programme of the Group of Experts to date has not fully explored the relationship that geographical names, national names

programmes and the work of the Group of Experts has, or could have, with shaping human understanding of, and impact on, the environment;

(e) Decides that the Group of Experts shall consider current and potential connections between geographical names and the environment and incorporate examples of relevant practices, research or working relationships in its operations and deliberations.

Recommendation 3

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its 2021 session ([E/2021/69](#));

(b) Decides that the 2023 session of the Group of Experts shall be held from 1 to 5 May 2023;

(c) Approves the provisional agenda of the 2023 session ([GEGN.2/2023/1](#)).

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 2/2021/1

Report of the Chair

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report of the Chair of the Group of Experts;

(b) Appreciated the leadership of the Chair, the work of the Bureau and the working group conveners and the support from the Statistics Division in arranging and preparing for the virtual second session during the ongoing pandemic;

(c) Announced the new Vice-Chair, Susan Birtles (Australia) and thanked Hasanuddin Abidin (Indonesia) for his service;

(d) Commended the efforts to prioritize the development of the draft strategic plan and programme of work 2021–2029 and improve integration with other United Nations institutions.

Decision 2/2021/2

Report of the Secretariat

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretariat describing the activities undertaken in the two-year intersessional period coordinating the work of the Group of Experts, particularly the preparations for the second session of the new Group of Experts;

(b) Thanked the Statistics Division and, by extension, the Secretariat for their continued valuable and unfaltering support to the Group of Experts, particularly during the difficult times and restrictions faced in the past year owing to the global pandemic, and for the ongoing coordination of the activities of the Group of Experts, which enabled the strategic plan and programme of work 2021–2029 to come to fruition;

(c) Appreciated the work done by the Secretariat in maintaining the website of the Group of Experts and reviving the online World Geographical Names database, noted that the completion of those modifications and access to the database as soon

as possible would be of great benefit, encouraged Member States to supply their authorized data and sound files and/or to update their existing information, and welcomed the offer by Canada of assistance as needed;

(d) Noted and supported the recommendations of the Secretariat to further strengthen the operations of the Group of Experts, which include:

- (i) Convening regular virtual meetings of the Bureau and the Chairs of its 24 linguistic and geographical divisions;
- (ii) Identifying resources to be used to develop e-learning toponymy platforms to sustain its capacity-development offering;
- (iii) Creating a working group on national names standardization, which could incorporate the Task Team for Africa;
- (iv) Identifying officers to fill vacant positions and designing succession planning strategies.

Decision 2/2021/3

National, divisional and Working Group on Country Names reports

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note with thanks of the 39 reports and 10 written statements submitted, their summary provided by the Chair and the highlights provided by the delegates of the relevant countries;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the breadth of information made available about the organization of national standardization of geographical names, the rules applied to the standardization of endonyms and exonyms, the collection, checking and archiving of geographical names, the management of those data, the value of those names as cultural heritage and the outreach about that process, as well as the consequences of the pandemic on the activities in that matter;

(c) Reaffirmed the commitment by the Bureau to produce a template for the country reports well in advance of the third session;

(d) Took note of the reports submitted by 13 of the 24 geographical or linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts and expressed appreciation for the rich body of information presenting relevant methods, issues and techniques, and also took note of the written statements;

(e) Encouraged divisions to model work based on the operations of other divisions and the feedback provided and also encouraged individual countries to continue to support the activities of divisions;

(f) Took note of the updated Group of Experts list of country names;

(g) Acknowledged the work of the two Co-Conveners of the Working Group on Country Names, Leo Dillon (United States of America) and Élisabeth Calvarin (France), currently retired, and expressed its congratulations to them for their efforts, as well as its appreciation to the Chair for updating the list of country names, which should be maintained in future.

Decision 2/2021/4

Cooperation and liaison with other organizations

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports submitted for discussion by the representatives of the Joint International Cartographic Association/International Geographical Union

Commission on Toponymy, the Latin America Division of the Group of Experts and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management;

(b) Also took note of considerations raised in relation to cooperation and liaison with organizations additional to those that made presentations, with the current focus on the International Geographical Union;

(c) Recognized the importance of relationships between the Group of Experts and the organizations with which it maintains liaison;

(d) Welcomed the invitation from the Commission on Toponymy to host symposiums on topics to support the work of the Group of Experts;

(e) Also welcomed the invitation for more formal cooperation between the Group of Experts and the Committee of Experts;

(f) Acknowledged the intention to establish cooperation between the Group of Experts and the global task force for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Decision 2/2021/5

National and international standardization of geographical names

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of nine reports for discussion and six for information submitted under this agenda item;

(b) Welcomed the interesting exploration of issues emerging in the range of national standardization programmes;

(c) Encouraged names authorities to share their policies and principles with regard to details of language through diverse media affiliated with the Group of Experts and to disseminate their authorized geographical names as widely as possible;

(d) Called for the open and free use of geographical names data from various sources under an appropriate regulation framework;

(e) Announced the new Coordinator for toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use, Jasper Hogerwerf (Netherlands), and thanked Gerhard Rampl (Austria) for his service;

(f) Welcomed the recent updates to the inventory of toponymic guidelines and its dissemination through various media devices;

(g) Encouraged Member States that had not yet prepared toponymic guidelines to do so in accordance with the template suggested by the Coordinator and regularly update those guidelines and report to the Group of Experts at its subsequent sessions;

(h) Took note of problems occurring in the use of geographical names by map providers and platforms and encouraged the Group of Experts to find measures to engage with them, in line with its strategic plan and programme of work 2021–2029, for example, writing to them to highlight the problems found, informing about the benefits gained by using standardized geographical names and offering to collaborate on sharing authoritative information through various discussion forums;

(i) Noted with concern the resistance by some Governments and others to using standardized geographical names (such as when driven by tourism imperatives), recognized tools that would help, such as legislation, education and outreach, and suggested that the matter be open for future discussion to share good practice and experiences with a view to stronger supporting advice from the Group of Experts.

Decision 2/2021/6**Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions and evaluation of the work of the Group of Experts**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the five reports for discussion and one for information submitted under this agenda item;
- (b) Appreciated the work of the Bureau and the working group conveners, the support from the Statistics Division and all the input from States Members of the United Nations in drafting a strategic plan and programme of work;
- (c) Approved the draft strategic plan and programme of work 2021–2029 as a guiding framework of the Group of Experts and geographical names standardization of the Member States during the period 2021–2029;
- (d) Acknowledged the progress concerning the review of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions for their relevance to the work of the Group of Experts and encouraged the Bureau to coordinate an update of the review before each session;
- (e) Welcomed the initiative to extend discussion to the relevance of geographical names to responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;
- (f) Called for further exploration of the theme “Geographical names and the environment” to better understand the role of geographical names and the actions of names authorities in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, and to pursue further synergies across subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council;
- (g) Appreciated the work done by the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation to improve the functional efficiency of the Group of Experts, including its involvement in implementing the recommendations from the first session of the Group of Experts, motivating the implementation of resolutions and maintaining the multilingual database for resolutions.

Decision 2/2021/7**Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the report for discussion submitted under this agenda item;
- (b) Welcomed the exploration of work undertaken in the area of publicity and engagement in the Group of Experts strategic plan and programme of work 2021–2029 presented in the report;
- (c) Encouraged further exploration to create a sustainable model for the funding of projects through a Group of Experts trust fund under the umbrella Statistics Division trust fund, securing transparency, efficiency and governance.

Decision 2/2021/8**Activities on national standardization in Africa**

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the two reports for discussion submitted under this agenda item, as well as two oral presentations, and recognized the actions taken for the standardization of geographical names in Africa and noted the difficulties expressed in recognizing the importance of place names standardization by government

authorities, the difficulties of continental experts coming together to work on this issue and the need for additional resources;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the kind reception and offer of assistance to convene meetings and support the GeoNyms tool given by the Economic Commission for Africa in response to the requests and suggestions made by the Group of Experts;

(c) Emphasized that assistance could be provided mainly in the areas of (i) raising awareness among government authorities, (ii) facilitating the networking of experts, and (iii) providing an update of the GeoNyms online geographical names management tool.

Decision 2/2021/9

Toponymic education

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the four reports for discussion and one for information submitted under this agenda item;

(b) Welcomed the developments in online training courses in toponymy developed by Indonesia and the online course on the Norwegian Place Name Act from Norway;

(c) Expressed appreciation for the streamed audiovisual lectures on toponymy planned by the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy;

(d) Showed support for the suggestion that the Working Group collaborate with the divisions on developing content and finding suitable presenters in different United Nations languages;

(e) Encouraged Member States to indicate the topics most useful to them in developing their geographical names standardization programmes;

(f) Welcomed the invitation to re-establish the planning for a post-COVID-19 regional training course in toponymy in Indonesia for the Asia South-East Division.

Decision 2/2021/10

Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the three reports for discussion under this agenda item;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the preparation of language-specific versions of the glossary of terminology and encouraged other such works;

(c) Acknowledged the need to evaluate the possibility for revision of the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(d) Encouraged experts to continue to suggest and the Working Group to address proposals for additions, modifications and corrections to the database of toponymic terminology.

Decision 2/2021/11

Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the eight reports for discussion and five for information submitted under this agenda item;

(b) Noted the wide range of issues that the topic of geographical names as cultural heritage contains;

(c) Supported the continuation of the sharing of national experiences and engagement with indigenous groups to educate others within the Group of Experts and promote the work;

(d) Encouraged further cooperation with the Working Group on Exonyms to discuss the different functions of endonyms and exonyms and as parts of a distinctive cultural heritage.

Decision 2/2021/12

Exonyms

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the four reports for discussion and four for information, as well as the written statements, submitted under this agenda item;

(b) Appreciated the work and deliberation on exonyms conducted by the experts;

(c) Decided to conduct further discussions on finding guidelines that reconcile 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;

(d) Encouraged further cooperation with the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage to discuss the different functions of endonyms and exonyms and as parts of a distinctive cultural heritage.

Decision 2/2021/13

Toponymic data files and gazetteers (data processing and tools, database management, data dissemination: products and services)

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the nine reports for discussion and three for information submitted under this agenda item and welcomed the information made available, the active participation and the efforts undertaken by Member States to inform about and enhance geographical names data management;

(b) Also took note of the report of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers on the recent and current activities and the other reports submitted by experts from nine different Member States and one division;

(c) Adopted and formally ratified the name change to the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management;

(d) Affirmed the support for the strategic plan and programme of work outlined for the Working Group for the period 2021–2029 and the willingness of Member States to participate and contribute in the action items;

(e) Requested the Working Group to deliver its technical expertise and advice for Strategy 1, Technical expertise, and for Strategies 2 to 5, where requested;

(f) Noted that linked data was another stage in the evolution of data management methodologies that the Group of Experts and Member States needed to consider to facilitate widespread use of standardized geographical names;

(g) Requested the Working Group to facilitate collaborations and workshops on linked data between national names authorities and linked data practitioners in order to provide practical guidance on organizational and technical issues and processes, to continue to share information and case studies, to demonstrate the combined benefits of standardized geographical names management and linked data

development, and to enable intercommunication of linked data, among others, providing an overview of ontologies;

(h) Agreed that for the online discussion forum (Wiki) of the Working Group, it might work more effectively in becoming a forum for documentation sharing;

(i) Recommended that developments should be integrated into national and regional spatial data infrastructures (resolution VIII/6 of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names) and be coordinated with activities of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management related to the fundamental data theme “Geographical names”;

(j) Encouraged all Member States to continue to share learnings, challenges and ongoing plans within the Working Group towards an efficient geographical names data management, emphasizing innovation in methodology and technology for the development of national geographical names databases, web services and applications for a variety of purposes, for example health, emergency and other services, and particularly the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Decision 2/2021/14

Writing systems and pronunciation

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report of the Working Group on Romanization Systems on the recent and current activities and the three further reports submitted by experts from three different Member States;

(b) Agreed to continue to investigate innovative methods to be used either for romanization or recording pronunciation of geographical names;

(c) Noted the work on transliteration between non-Roman script writing systems and encouraged Member States to continue such projects;

(d) Encouraged all Member States to continue to share ongoing work with the Working Group towards further implementation of existing United Nations romanization systems and towards the adoption of new systems.

Decision 2/2021/15

Other geographical names issues: “Creating an equal society through geographical names”

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the convening of the panel discussion on the theme “Creating an equal society through geographical names”, held as a side event, noted with satisfaction the appreciation and interest expressed by the 70 participants in the exploration of the role of geographical names in the pursuit of an inclusive and equal society, and also noted with satisfaction the presentation on the potential for geographical names to contribute to the inclusiveness of society;

(b) Recognized that this issue was one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, which it had endorsed, but also that the possible contribution of geographical names to this target had to be reconciled with other practical and heritage fundamental functions;

(c) Invited the Bureau of the Group of Experts and the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage to consider the development of guidelines aimed at equality and inclusion in geographical names in harmony with the principles on restoring, protecting and preserving cultural heritage, noting the contribution to relevant Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Expressed the hope that national names authorities would consider developing processes and mechanisms for geographical names standardization to achieve greater equality in naming, and respect the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities to their own geographical names;

(e) Urged the Bureau of the Group of Experts and its relevant working groups to pursue the topic in future events and sessions through dedicated meeting arrangements, with a view to a possible recommendation to the Economic and Social Council.

Decision 2/2021/16

Other business

The Group of Experts:

(a) Expressed deep appreciation that the International Geographical Union Award Committee had decided to confer upon Helen Kerfoot, delegate to the Group of Experts from Canada, one of two International Geographical Union Lauréat d'honneur awards for 2021;

(b) Noted her exceptional contribution in many fields relating to geography, in particular with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

II. Statements submitted by Member States and entities

3. Given the informal nature and the limited time of the virtual meetings, participating Member States and entities were invited to submit written statements and interventions referring to specific agenda items. In total, 101 written statements and interventions were received, which were uploaded, in the language received, to the website for the session. The table below contains further information.

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Statements received</i>
3. Reports of the Chair and the Secretariat	Canada (1) United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1)
4. Reports:	Australia (1)
(a) Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names	China (2) Cyprus (1) Dominican Republic (1) India (1) Iran (Islamic Republic of) (1) Poland (2) Saudi Arabia (1) Turkey (1)
4. Reports:	Austria (1)
(b) Divisions of the Group of Experts	Iran (Islamic Republic of) (1) Poland (1) East Central and South-East Europe Division (1)

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Statements received</i>
4. Reports:	—
(c) Working Group on Country Names	
4. Reports:	Japan (2)
(d) National and international meetings and conferences	Republic of Korea (2)
5. Cooperation and liaison with other organizations	Canada (1)
(a) International organizations	China (1)
	East Central and South–East Europe Division (1)
5. Cooperation and liaison with other organizations	United Kingdom (1)
(b) Economic Commission for Africa and Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management	
6. National and international standardization of geographical names	Austria (1)
	Canada (2)
(a) Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation	China (1)
	France (4)
	Germany (1)
	India (1)
	Indonesia (3)
	Norway (1)
	Republic of Korea (1)
	Slovenia (1)
	Norden Division (1)
6. National and international standardization of geographical names	—
(b) Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use	
7. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions and evaluation of the work of the Group of Experts	Austria (1)
	Canada (1)
	China (1)
	Germany (1)
	Indonesia (2)
	Japan (1)
	New Zealand (1)
	Norway (2)

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Statements received</i>
	Republic of Korea (1)
8. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects	–
9. Activities on national standardization in Africa	–
10. Toponymic education	Austria (1)
	Canada (1)
	China (1)
	Germany (1)
	Indonesia (2)
	Norway (2)
11. Toponymic terminology	Australia (1)
	Indonesia (2)
	Japan (1)
	Poland (1)
12. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues	Austria (1)
	Indonesia (1)
13. Exonyms	Austria (3)
	China (2)
	Denmark (1)
	Finland (3)
	France (1)
	Indonesia (1)
	Poland (1)
	Working Group on Exonyms (1)
14. Toponymic data files and gazetteers	Australia (1)
	Austria (1)
	Canada (1)
	India (1)
	Indonesia (3)
	Japan (4)
	New Zealand (1)
	Norway (2)

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Statements received</i>
	Slovenia (1)
	United Kingdom (1)
15. Writing systems and pronunciation	France (1)
	Japan (2)
16. Other geographical names issues	–
17. Arrangements for the 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names	Dutch- and German-speaking Division (1)

III. Provisional agenda, venue and dates of the 2023 session

4. On 12 May 2021, the Group of Experts approved the dates and the provisional agenda of the 2023 session ([GEGN.2/2023/1](#)) by means of a silence procedure, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213. It decided that its 2023 session would be held from 1 to 5 May 2023 and agreed to explore the possibility of using United Nations facilities in Europe as the venue of future sessions.

IV. Adoption of the report

5. Also on 12 May, the Group of Experts adopted the draft report on its 2021 session ([GEGN.2/2021/L.1/Rev.1](#)), together with an informal paper containing the recommendations and decisions arising from the session, by means of a silence procedure, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, and entrusted the Rapporteurs with streamlining and finalizing the report.

V. Organization of the session

A. Opening and duration of the session

6. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 2021/213, and taking into account the prevailing conditions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic affecting the working arrangements and the available technological and procedural solutions in the interim period, the Group of Experts did not hold formal meetings during its 2021 session. The Group of Experts held 10 online informal meetings with remote simultaneous interpretation from 3 to 7 May 2021, pursuant to Council resolution [2018/2](#) and decision 2021/213.

7. The Group of Experts conducted its business through correspondence and informal consultations, and considered proposals by means of a silence procedure, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213.

B. Attendance

8. Each virtual meeting was attended by an average of 127 participants representing the geographical and linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts (see annex). Also in attendance were representatives of United Nations system organizations and observers for intergovernmental, non-governmental and other organizations.

C. Officers of the session

9. The officers of the session were as follows:

Chair:

Pierre Jaillard (France)

Vice-Chairs:

Susan Birtles (Australia)

Sungjae Choo (Republic of Korea)

Rapporteurs:

Wendy Shaw (New Zealand)

Trent Palmer (United States of America)

For the names of the Chairs of the Divisions, see <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/uneggn/divisions>.

10. The officers of the Working Groups were:

Task Team for Africa

Convener:

Brahim Atoui

Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use

Convener:

Gerhard Rampl

Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

Convener:

Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management

Convener:

Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu

Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

Convener:

Trent Palmer

Working Group on Romanization Systems

Conveners:

Peeter Päll

Catherine Cheetham

Working Group on Country Names

Conveners:

Vacant

Working Group on Publicity and Funding

Convener:

Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

Convener:

Sungjae Choo

Working Group on Exonyms

Convener:

Kohei Watanabe

Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Convener:

Annette Torensjö

D. Opening statements

11. The Chair opened the session on 3 May 2021. He made opening remarks and summarized the main tasks ahead.
12. The Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist made a statement.

E. Adoption of the agenda

13. The Group of Experts adopted its provisional agenda ([GEGN.2/2021/1/Rev.1](#)) by means of a silence procedure, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (b) Organization of work.
3. Reports of the Chair and the Secretariat.
4. Reports:
 - (a) Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names;
 - (b) Divisions of the Group of Experts;
 - (c) Working Group on Country Names;
 - (d) National and international meetings and conferences.
5. Cooperation and liaison with other organizations:
 - (a) International organizations;
 - (b) Economic Commission for Africa and Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.
6. National and international standardization of geographical names:
 - (a) Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation;
 - (b) Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use.
7. Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions and evaluation of the work of the Group of Experts.
8. Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects.
9. Activities on national standardization in Africa.

10. Toponymic education.
 11. Toponymic terminology.
 12. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues.
 13. Exonyms.
 14. Toponymic data files and gazetteers.
 15. Writing systems and pronunciation.
 16. Other geographical names issues.
 17. Arrangements for the 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
 18. Other business.
 19. Presentation and adoption of decisions.
 20. Adoption of the report on the 2021 session.
 21. Closing of the session.
14. The Group of Experts approved its organization of work ([GEGN.2/2021/3](#)) by means of a silence procedure, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213.
15. The Group of Experts also adopted a decision by means of a silence procedure, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, in which it invited the following entities to participate as observers in the session: Aichi University; Hydrographic Institute of Croatia; Czech Commission on Geographical Names; Dirección Nacional de Fronteras y Límites del Estado; Geospatial Information Authority of Japan; Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics; Instituto Geográfico Militar, Chile; International Cartographic Association; Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers; International Geographical Union; International Hydrographic Organization; Kyushu University; Specialized Agencies Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan; Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Croatia; Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research; Sistema Nacional de Coordinación de Información Territorial; State Geodetic Administration of Croatia; Teikyo University; University of Zambia; University of Alberta; University of Ottawa; and University of Tokyo.

F. Adoption of the report

16. The Group of Experts adopted its draft report ([GEGN.2/2021/L.1](#)) by means of a silence procedure, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, for submission to the Council, and authorized its Rapporteurs to finalize the report, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat of the Group of Experts.

G. Documentation

17. The documents before the Group of Experts are available on the website of the Statistics Division at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/2nd_session_2021/#documents.

Annex

List of geographical and linguistic divisions

Africa Central Division
Africa East Division
Africa South Division
Africa West Division
Arabic Division
Asia East Division (other than China)
Asia South-East Division
Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)
Baltic Division
Celtic Division
China Division
Dutch- and German-speaking Division
East Central and South-East Europe Division
Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division
East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic)
French-speaking Division
India Division
Latin America Division
Norden Division
Pacific South-West Division
Portuguese-speaking Division
Romano-Hellenic Division
United Kingdom Division
United States of America/Canada Division
