



United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names Consistent Use of Place Names

Consistent use of accurate place names is an essential element of effective communication worldwide and supports socio-economic development, conservation and national infrastructure.

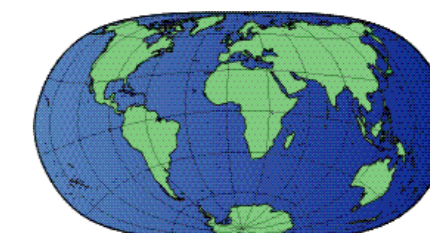
That's why the United Nations established the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEKN).

UNGEKN promotes consistent use worldwide of accurate place names.

Everyone Benefits

Place names can identify and reflect culture, heritage and landscape. Correct use of accurate place names can provide benefits to local, national and international communities engaged in:

- ❖ trade and **commerce** ;
- ❖ **population** censuses and national statistics;
- ❖ **property** rights and cadastre;
- ❖ urban and regional **planning** ;
- ❖ **environmental** management—sustainable development and conservation;
- ❖ natural disaster relief, **emergency** preparedness and receipt of aid;
- ❖ **security** strategy and peacekeeping operations;
- ❖ search and **rescue** operations;
- ❖ **map** and atlas production;
- ❖ automatic **navigation** ;
- ❖ **tourism** ;
- ❖ **communications** , including postal and news services.



Looking Ahead

To encourage the consistent use worldwide of accurate place names, UNGEKN is involved in:

- ❖ **outreach** to countries that do not have name standardization mechanisms, databases (digital or manual) or national gazetteers;
- ❖ supporting the development of **single romanization systems** ;
- ❖ dissemination and wider use of **nationally authorized names** ;
- ❖ development of communication and training **tools** .

How to Progress

Success of UNGEKN programmes is largely dependent upon the implementation of national and local activities by individual countries.

Members of UNGEKN act as catalysts to facilitate the required developments and changes to place name infrastructures.

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More Information

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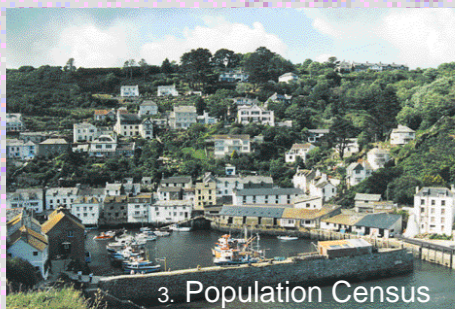
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1. Commerce



2. Local Trade



3. Population Census



4. Conservation



5. Navigation

How Consistency Helps

National programmes to standardize names of cities, villages, and land and water features offer many benefits. Trade and the provision of essential services are improved at national and international levels. Accurate use of place names assists in resolving political pressures and in promoting peace among nations.

For example, imagine the obstacles in expanding a product or service into a country which uses a different alphabet, has many locations referred to by several names in different languages, or does not have a centralized national place name register accessible internationally.

Consider the difficulty in delivering food quickly to a town in a war-torn country or a natural disaster area if the town is known by different names and recorded in different languages on international, national and local maps and legal documents. In such cases, relief organizations, the media and local administrators cannot share the same frame of reference.

Consistent place naming can make a difference.

Did you know that Cape Town, Kaapstad, Ekapa, Le Cap and Kapkaupunki are all names for the same place? Standardization helps to reduce the confusion that can result when such variations are used interchangeably across different language texts.

Making It Happen—UNGEGN

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names includes names experts, cartographers, geographers, historians, linguists, planners and surveyors.

Members are responsible for developing and promoting **UNGEGN** programmes and activities.

Benefits of consistent place naming around the world

UNGEGN Programmes

UNGEGN has developed programmes to:

- ❖ stimulate the establishment of **an authority in each country** for national name standardization, giving particular attention to issues associated with multi-lingual areas and names used by indigenous peoples;
- ❖ provide or encourage **training** for countries wishing to form national names authorities, or to create place name **registers** ;
- ❖ promote the **application** of nationally standardized names on maps and in documents;
- ❖ encourage dissemination of standardized names through publication of **national gazetteers** (alphabetical lists of names with coordinates and other data);
- ❖ promote development of national **automated data processing** capabilities and international technology exchange;
- ❖ encourage **collaboration** between countries on the standardization of names for transboundary features;
- ❖ promote the use of **standardized terminology** in connection with place names.

UNGEGN place name activity supports United Nations goals, including:

- ❖ maintaining international **peace and security** ;
- ❖ developing **friendly relations** among nations;
- ❖ achieving **international cooperation** in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems;
- ❖ **harmonizing** the actions of nations to achieve these ends.



6. Delivery of Aid



7. Regional Development



8. Property Rights



9. Sustainable Development



10. Tourism