Agenda

1. What's in a name and names standardization
2. UNGEGN's structure and operations
3. Group Simulation exercise – Creating and changing a place name
4. The creation of national names authorities
5. The benefits of geographical names standardization
6. Discussion UN-GGIM/UNGEGN collaborative project.

What is in a name

GEOGRAPHY: We name objects or features on the Earth and extra-terrestrial ones, which we want to locate and classify.

LANGUAGE: When we name features, we use our language, so we need some linguistic definitions

PRONOUNCIATION: These features are not only for reading but also for verbal communication, so we should be able to pronounce them correctly.

WRITING SYSTEMS: We need to write down the names in our gazetteers and maps, so we have to use writing systems and know about their characteristics

TOPONYMS: for toponyms we match specific topographical objects with specific names, from a specific language, written in a specific writing system

MAPS: Maps are one of the forms in which toponyms are rendered

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Some important terms related to Toponymy

- *Glossary* - Specialized list of terms relating to a particular field of study or interest, which may contain explanatory or descriptive information on the items listed.

- *Gazetteer* - List of toponyms arranged in alphabetic or other sequential order, with an indication of their location and preferably including variant names, type of topographic feature and other defining or descriptive information

- *Place name index* - Ordered list of toponyms, including data about location but little or no additional information.

- *Toponym Standardization* - The establishment, by an appropriate authority, of a specific set of standards or norms for the uniform rendering of toponyms.

- *Official name* - Toponym sanctioned by a legally constituted (e.g. national) names authority and applied within its jurisdiction

- *Names authority* - A board or commission, assigned advisory function and/or power of decision in matters of toponymy by the state.

Geographical Names have Meanings

1. They represent a vital part of the cultural heritage of a country
2. They reflect the conditions that reigned when the place was first settled
3. They reflect specific events
4. They bear images

PAUSE

In groups can you identify two geographical names that satisfy any of the four points above?
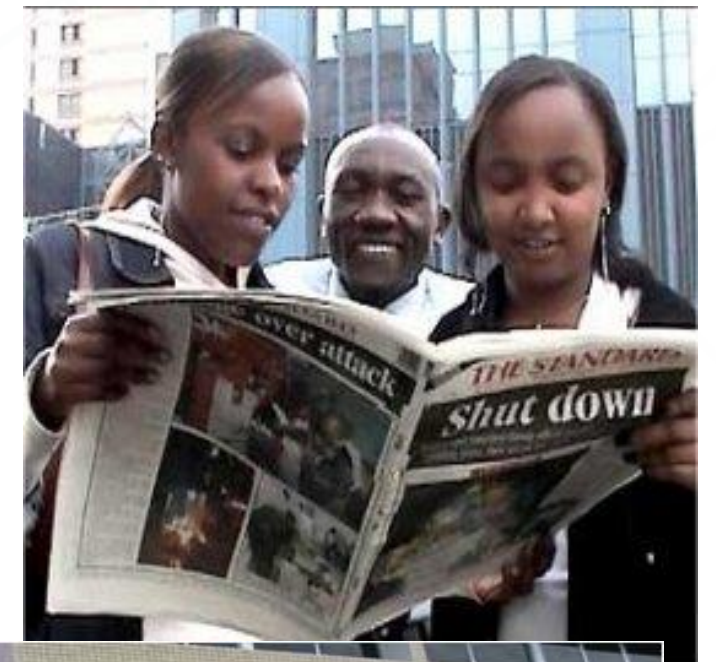
Using names ...

- People use names in everyday discussion
- Names are used in books, atlases, school texts, maps, road signs, timetables, media ...
  - paper , digital, on physical objects
- People search for other information and link information often through names ...
  - indexes, gazetteers, on Google, Google Earth
    - paper, on-line, through databases

"Standardization"

- UNGEGN Glossary:
  - *standardization, geographical names*

    "The prescription by a names authority of one or more particular names, together with their precise written form, for application to a specific geographical feature, as well as the conditions for their use."

- Authority
  - apply some official status to names – written form
  - how name is applied
  - how used
  - romanization (?)   *approved name*; *official name*

Standardization means -

- Aiming to avoid –
  - Duplication of names
  - Poorly recorded names
  - Confused applications
  - Lack of quick and easy access to data

GUIGEMTINGA
gigemtênga

Qorbis
Ston thermale
A419

Ain el Fakroun

Korbous
(St. Thermale)

So ....

- Logical and most useful if:
  - Spellings are clear, consistent, unambiguous
  - A name is clearly 'tied' to a location
  - Difficulties with what names are correct are sorted out
  - These names are recorded, stored and are easily available to governments and the public
  - Everybody can use the same set of names to communicate

  "standardization"

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What are the Benefits of standardization

PAUSE

Take a few minutes, in groups discuss why do you think standardizing names are important from your perspective.

Write them down to share later

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UNGEGN's Structure and Operations

1. Overview
2. Aims
3. Early Days
4. Structure
5. Bureau
6. Divisions
7. Working Groups
8. Liaison with other organizations

UNGEGN - Overview

UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names

- A subsidiary body of ECOSOC

- Promotes standardization of geographical names in response to national requirements

- Creates and follows-up on the implementation of resolutions

- Provides a forum for discussion – geographers, linguists, administrators, GIS specialists, cartographers ...

- Supported by a Secretariat at UNHQ (NY)

- Creates working groups and task teams to focus on specific areas of current concern and interest

- Has 24 geographical/linguistic divisions for grassroots work

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UNGEGN's aims

- Encourage the creation of national names authorities
  - backed by legislation
  - respect local usage of names
  - collect, store and disseminate authorized names - for government and public use
- Raise awareness of the value and benefits of geographical names standardization
- Recognize the value of geographical names both to identify place and as elements of cultural heritage
- Develop single scientifically-based systems of romanization
- Contribute to work of UN bodies and collaborate with non-UN organizations

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Early days of UNGEGN

- **1959 – Resolution 715A (XXVII) of ECOSOC**
  - To bring together experts to advise on geographical names for use in UN Cartography

- **1960 – 1st meeting of experts in New York**
  - USA, France, UK, Iran, Guatemala, China

- **1967 - First Conference held in Geneva**
  - 11 conferences every 5 years until 2017
    - New York, Geneva, London, Athens, Montréal, Berlin
  - 30 UNGEGN sessions – two (2) between conferences
    - New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Bangkok
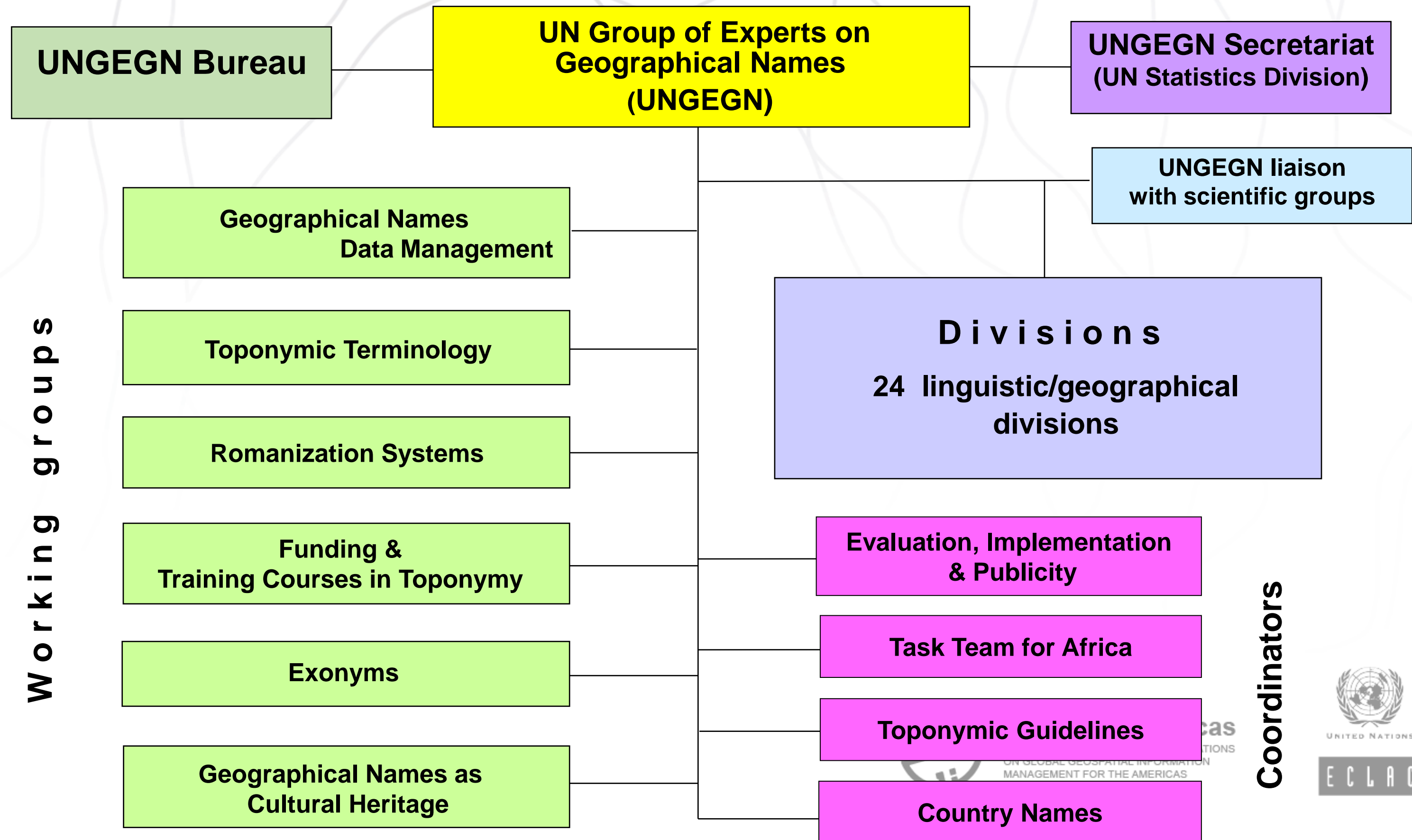

Meredith Burrill, USA

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UNGEGN Structure

UNGEGN Bureau

UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

UNGEGN Secretariat (UN Statistics Division)

UNGEGN liaison with scientific groups

Supported by the UN Statistics Division through the UNGEGN Secretariat

Working groups

- Geographical Names Data Management
- Toponymic Terminology
- Romanization Systems
- Funding & Training Courses in Toponymy
- Exonyms
- Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Divisions

24 linguistic/geographical divisions

Coordinators

- Evaluation, Implementation & Publicity
- Task Team for Africa
- Toponymic Guidelines
- Country Names

UNGEGN Bureau

Officers of UNGEGN

Chairperson
- Mr. Pierre Jaillard, France

Vice-Chairpersons
- Mr. Sungjae Choo, Republic of Korea
- Ms. Susan Birtles, Australia

Rapporteurs
- Ms. Wendy Shaw, New Zealand
- Ms. Ana Cristina Resende, Brazil

UNGEGN Chairperson

Vice-Chairpersons

Rapporteurs

UNGEGN Divisions (24)

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

UNGEGN working groups

Romanization

Training

Geo-names Data Mgmt

Evaluation / implementation

Terminology

Exonyms

Publicity / funding

Country names

Cultural heritage

Task Team for Africa

Coordination of Toponymic Guidelines

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UNGEGN Liaison with other Organizations

1. International Cartographic Association **(ICA)**

2. Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers **(ICANN)**

3. International Council of Onomastic Sciences **(ICOS)**

4. International Council on Indigenous Place Names **(ICIPN)**

5. International Hydrographic Organization **(IHO)**

6. International Organization for Standardization **(ISO)** Technical Committee 211 (TC/211)

7. Pan-American Institute of Geography and History **(PAIGH)**

8. Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research **(SCAR)**

9. Unicode Consortium

Simulation Exercise –the Names Authority, Board

Volunteers are Need

Members of Names Authority Board

Geographer, Surveyor, Historian, Linguist, Cartographer, and a member of the community. A Board chair is to be selected and a secretary. The board is meeting to decide on two applications.

- **Application One** – The authority is to hear an application from a local community to rescind a name considered to be offensive/derogatory and approve an alternate name.
- **Application Two-** a community has two names which is causing confusion for many reasons, the community has made a decision to accept one of these names as a commemorative name. The Board hears the case, deliberates and makes a decision.

Basic naming principles and guidelines are provided. The board may define and add other rules as deemed necessary based on the communities, history, economy, environment and cultural heritage. The Canadian Principles and Procedures may be used.

Simulation Exercise –Communities

There are two community groups- give yourselves a name

Community Group 1 – representing members of community wanting to change an existing name because it is considered derogatory.
Your job is to convince the council that the derogatory name (you created) is to be rescinded and the new name decided at the community meeting is to heard and be adopted by the Authoroty.

Community Group 2- you are presenting a case to the board to have your community/town name standardized. You need to convince the board that the name agreed by the community meets the guidelines for commemorative naming.

Naming principles and guidelines

Things you may consider:

- Language and spelling
- How much evidence is needed for a name to be approved
- Social, cultural and political concerns
- Number of years during which a local name has been used;
- Impact of the name change
- Clear application of the name to a feature/area.

Scan to access Canadian Principles and Procedures

For guidelines on commemorative naming ,use the following:
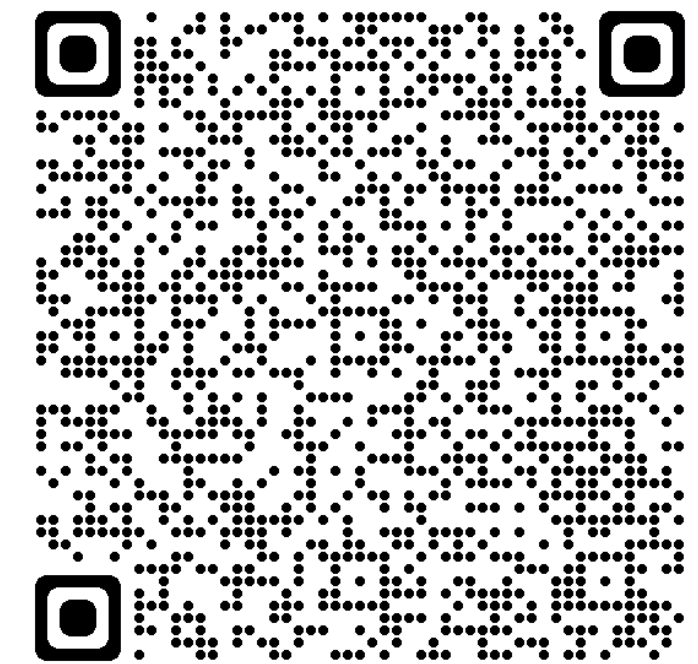
Canada's Principles and Procedures for Geographical Naming 2011

Principle 5 –Use of personal names

Principle 7 - Form and character of names

Appendix 3 – Commemorative Names

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UNGEGN Resolution I/4, 1967

a) Unnecessary changing of names be avoided;

b) The spelling of geographical names be as much as possible in accordance with the current orthographic practice of the country, with due regard to dialect forms;

c) The systematic treatment of names should not operate, to suppress significant elements;

d) Where some names occur in varying or grammatical forms, the national names authority should consider making one of those forms the official standard name (for names that can be declined, it should normally be the nominative case);

e) In all countries in whose languages the definite article could enter into geographical names, the national names authority should determine which names contain the definite article and standardize them accordingly; and for languages in which both definite and indefinite forms exist for all or most names, that standardization be based on one or the other form;
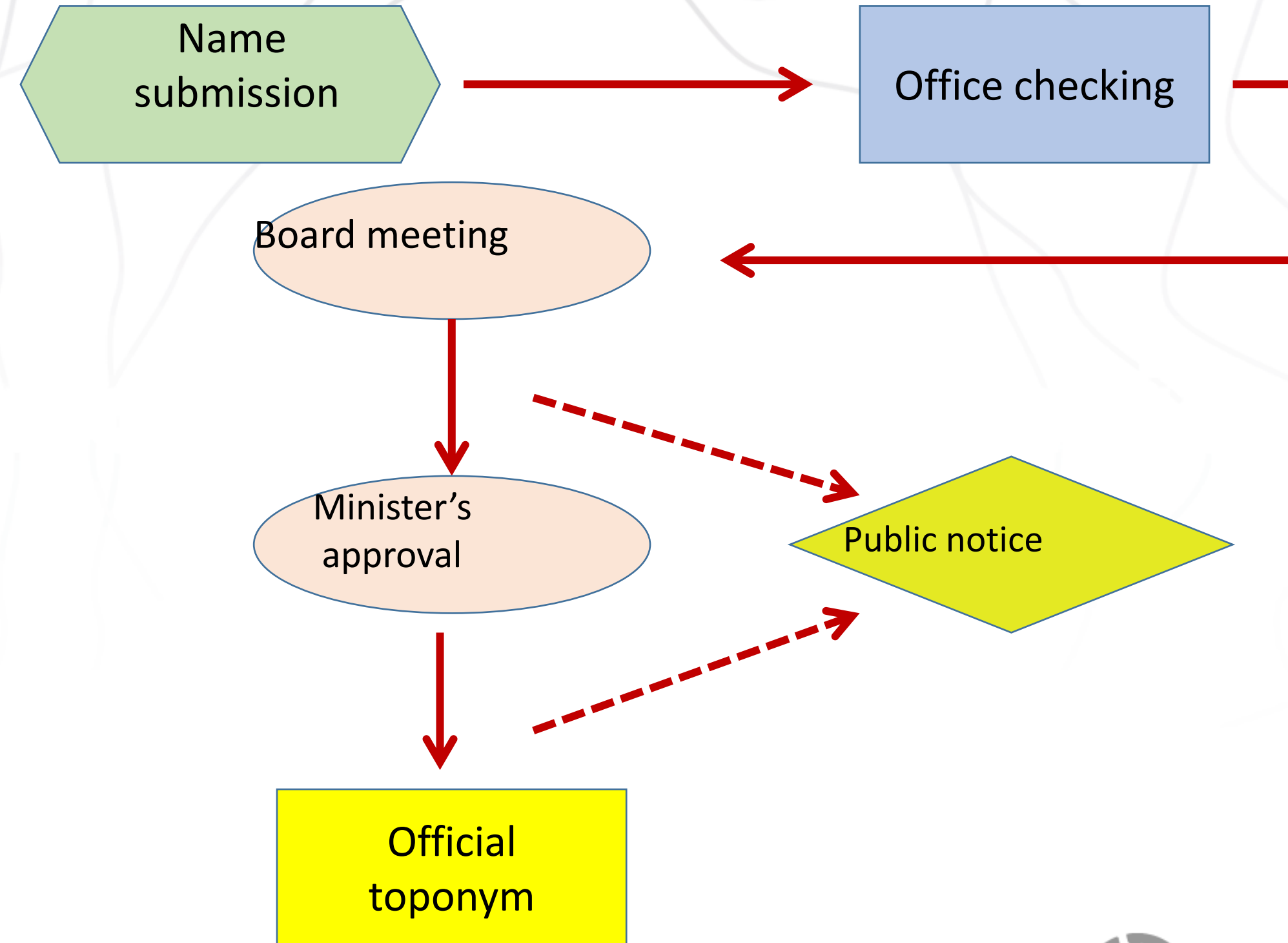
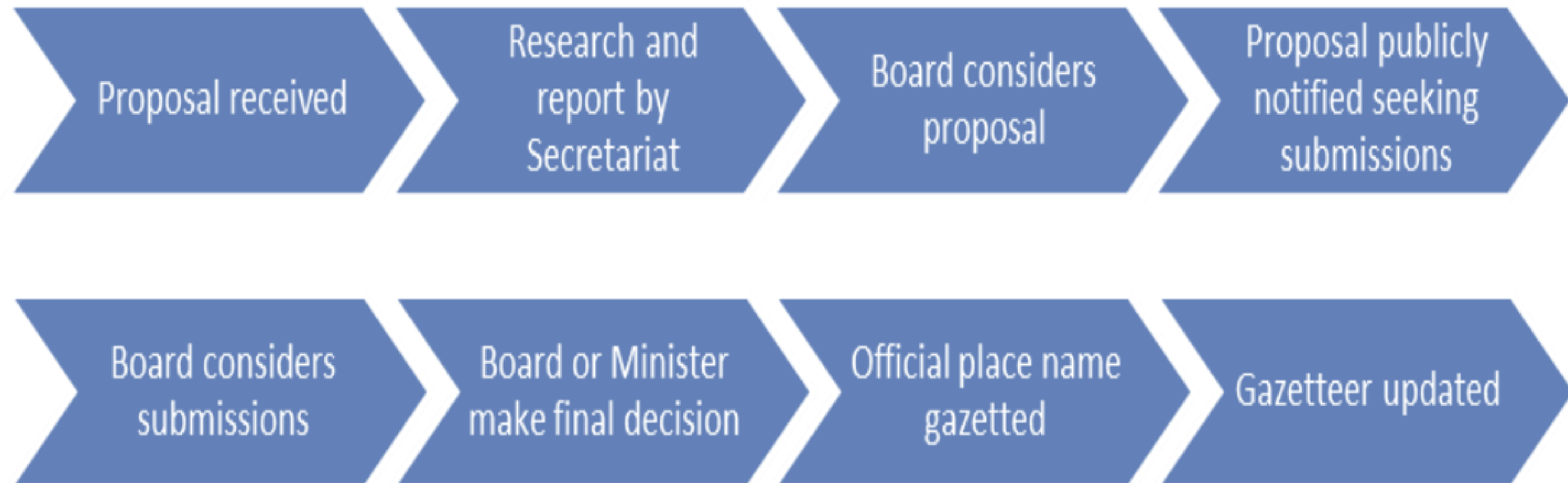# Naming authorization can be quite simple

Other steps may be necessary:
- referral to language specialists,
- more detailed surveys,
- considering public objections …

The Process – eg from New Zealand

Proposal received → Research and report by Secretariat → Board considers proposal → Proposal publicly notified seeking submissions

Board considers submissions → Board or Minister make final decision → Official place name gazetted → Gazetteer updated

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In the end

- Emphasis on care and consistency
- Reflection of language, heritage, identity
- Names recorded for the benefit of future generations
- Authorized names should get wide distribution and use
- If more than one name is acceptable, conditions of use should be clear

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Our Simulation Exercise –the steps

The two communities will meet and decide on their submission - 10 mins

Each community will make their case to the Board of the authority -5 min each

The Board meets and discusses the submissions, based on their guidelines .
They will then present their finding to the audience for the two communities.
They must tender reasons for the decision, whether it may be an approval, non approval, need for further research and information. 10 mins

Discussion

1. What did you learn from this exercise
2. Do you have a different impression of geographical names standardization
3. Do you have a names authority in your country?
4. If no, do you think your country needs a names board?
5. Would you wish to serve as a member of a names board?

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THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES

Why do we name places?

i.   To ensure the capacity to unambiguously identify and locate geographical entities and places, as an essential reference system for services, infrastructure and public administration.

ii. Ensuring that the valuable record of a country's places names with its variety of sources, reflecting unique patterns of settlement is preserved and accessible.

iii. To preserve geographical names and their variants over time, protect culture and heritage and contribute to historical information.

One strong argument generally used focuses on the consolidation of effort with less overall costs in geographical names collection, management and dissemination, generating consistent results and greater benefit to whole of government entities, private sector and academic institutions.

UN Resolutions

- UNCSGN resolution I/4a 1967 underlines need to establish national agencies … again V/15 1987
- Importance of toponyms in spatial data infrastructure … UN Regional Cartographic Conferences, 2000, 2001 and UN res. VIII/6, 2002
- Preservation of toponyms as elements of identity and cultural heritage … VIII/9 and IX/4 + link with UNESCO

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THE CREATION OF A NAMES AUTHORITY

i.   Identification of a national issue (economic, social, environmental) that standardized names are critical to addressing, the issue preferably relevant to governments national development priority

ii.   Document the requirement, make the case, if possible, prepare a cost benefit analysis. Decision makers always want to know what are the costs and the benefits.

iii. Evaluate existing government structures, the leadership, operational priorities direction and future plans of ministries and departments. Determine which body would be best suited to manage a national names body. Would it be the National Mapping Agency,

iv.   Identify partners, collaborators, the champion, at the senior executive level, with the advocacy, communication and networking skills needed to open the right doors

v.   Establish clearly defined objectives of the names authority, principles and procedures for the conduct of geographical names standardization. Once the goals, principles and procedures have been decided, one must obtain legal authority. This may be received via policy directive, an order, or legislation.

A clearly stated mandate

Many national authorities established through legislation
- Act of Parliament (1998) South Africa (SAGNC)
- Board Act: New Zealand (NZGB,1946, 2008)
- Decree: Israel (1951); Madagascar (KPMA, 1973)
- Cabinet document: Malaysia (NCGN, 2002)

Some countries have legislation regarding names
- Ireland: Official Languages Act, 2003
- New Zealand: since 1998 Māori place names for maps
- Norway: since 1990 Norwegian, Saami & Finnish names
- Estonia: since 1996 .. include language & spelling rules

ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITY

Key, essential elements for the operation of an authority are -

1. Leadership -providing strategic direction.
2. Staff -job descriptions outlining required qualification and skills and deciding on numbers depending on the responsibilities based on legislation and responsibilities, given size of names standardization portfolio.
3. A names committee/Board on Geographic names/national Names Advisory Council – consisting of a cross section of experts with varied backgrounds relevant to names standardization representing departments of government, academia, the private sector and civil society. Creates an environment that engenders trust, transparency and inclusion.
4. Funding
5. Communication and Awareness
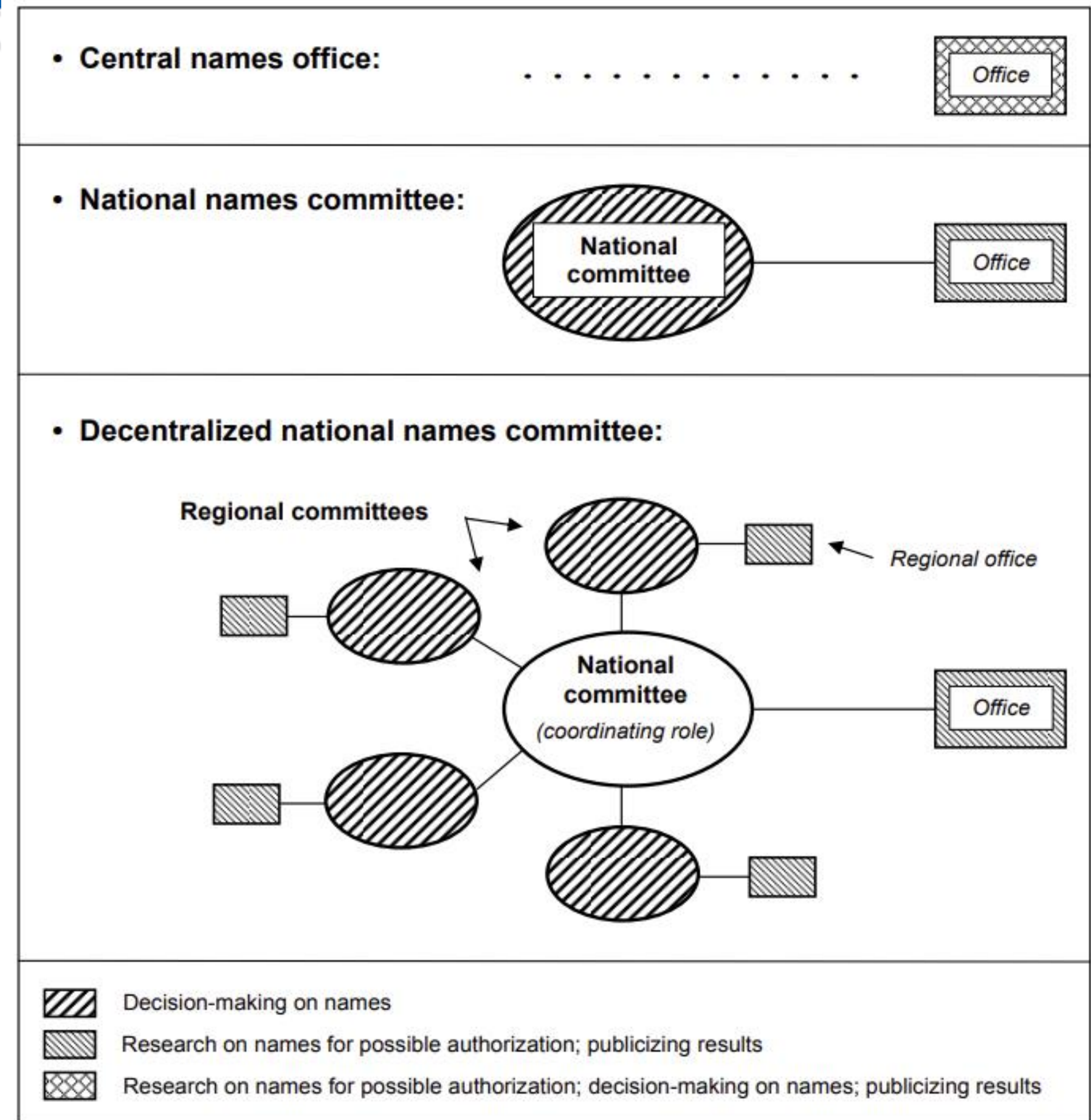
MODELS OF NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES

The choice depends on the nature of the country

1. Default if no names board
2. Centralized national names board
- all decisions under one roof
- by sub-committees: feature types, language
3. Decentralized to regional names boards
- with central umbrella coordinating authority
- with regional committees

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A NAMES AUTHORITY

1. Responsibilities and scope of decisions?
2. Developing policies and guidelines to support names approval or rejection
3. Making decisions/recommendations on names
4. Assuring minutes, names decisions … are made generally available
5. Other tasks?
   - displays, talks, workshops
   - promotion in media, conferences

ACTIVITY – Why a Names Authority

Reflecting on your national situation, identify two strong arguments in support of creating a national names authority, consisting of a Director, staff for names collection, management and dissemination and the coordination of an Names Advisory Committee

Importance of geographical names Standardization to Cyprus

Geographical names of Cyprus are more than just labels on a map. They are a connecting point between man and the land. They are needed to identify, describe, and analyse geographical entities. They carry the hopes and challenges of culture and identity of all Cypriots. Misuse of geographical names can cause friction. The official geographical names of Cyprus depict the island's history and culture through the years. They constitute significant evidence for citizens, researchers, historians, archaeologists and others, for analyzing, understanding, and preserving the identity of the nation.

Benefits from standardization and use of geographical names can be categorized in four main groups, these being: • Technical, • Social, • Economic, and • Cultural

Geographical names are an important part of our geographical and cultural environment. They identify geographical entities of different kinds and represent irreplaceable cultural values of vital significance to people's sense of well-being and belonging. Ancient monuments, ancient settlements, churches, monasteries, mosques, cemeteries and other significant topographical features, along with their respective geographical names, are solid examples and inseparable part of the cultural history of Cyprus.

Discussion UN-GGIM/UNGEGN collaborative project.

'*Preparation of a compendium of institutional arrangements on shared good practices between national mapping agencies and national names authorities'*. See Appendix 1 in E/C.20/2022/18/Add.1 for the project proposal.

The project proposal invited National Mapping Agencies (NMAs) and National Geographical Names Authorities (NGNAs) to collaborate and contribute to the development of a compendium of institutional arrangements and operational good practices that strengthens working relations between mapping and geographical names authorities to support the collection, management, and dissemination of standardized geographical names.

UNGEGN/UN-GGIM collaboration project

FROM THE 13 UN-GGIM SESSION

Countries expressing support for the project
1. Tonga
2. Indonesia
3. Mozambique
4. United States
5. Australia
6. Serbia
7. Sweden
8. Mexico
9. Belgium
10. Argentina
11. Jamaica
12. Saudi Arabia
13. Chile

Other expressions of support
1. ECA- UN-GGIM Africa
2. PAIGH
3. IGU

FROM THE 12 UN-GGIM SESSION

Countries/Bodies	Comments
1. Argentina	Supports the collaborative project and creating awareness
2. Canada	Welcomes the project and looking forward to participating
3. Germany	Supports proposal to conduct collaborative project and willing to contribute
4. Jamaica	Endorses project and is interested in the project
5. Morocco	Supports the project and wishes to participate
6. New Zealand	Supports the collaborative proposal
7. Sweden	Supports the collaborative project to strengthen relations between the mapping and naming bodies
8. United Kingdom	Supports the proposed activities
9. UN-GGIM Africa	Endorses the suggestion to foster coordination
10. UN-GGIM Europe	Supports the project

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UNGEGN/UN-GGIM collaboration project- OPTIONS

Option 1- The UNSD identifies and assigns existing staff within the division to coordinate and conduct the project and tasks.

Option 2 - The UNSD seeks the services of a UN intern for a period of six months. Lead time will be required to contract an intern.

Option 3 - National mapping agencies (NMA's) and National Names Authorities (NNA's) identify staff to be placed on virtual secondment for an agreed time and duration.

Option 4 - NMA's and NNA's conduct a self-study to identify good practices according to a template/questions to be designed.

Option 5 - Contract the services of a consultant to complete the project.

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- **United Nations**
- **New York**

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- **twitter: @UNSD_GEGN**