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Geographical Names****2021 session**

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**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity,
including indigenous, minority and regional languages and
multilingual issues****Putting Frisian names on the map****Summary****

Dutch is the national language of the Netherlands. It has official status throughout the Netherlands and its overseas territories. In addition, several other languages are recognized: Papiamentu (or Papiamentu) and English have official status in the Caribbean territories. Low Saxon and Limburgish are recognized as non-standardized regional languages, and Yiddish and Sinte Romani are recognized as non-territorial minority languages in the European part of the Netherlands. The largest minority language is Frisian (West Frisian), an official language in the province of Fryslân (Friesland).

The full report covers the developments in the use of Frisian names on topographic maps of the Netherlands over the centuries, with emphasis put on the past 75 years. Dutch names have dominated the maps from the seventeenth century until the 1970s. Increasing awareness of the Frisian-speaking community and recognition, from the beginning of the 1980s, of the Frisian language and Frisian names has eventually led to the acceptance of Frisian names appearing on maps. A steady increase in the number of Frisian names followed, and now, Frisian names have become dominant on maps in the Frisian-language area.

However, place naming is largely a municipal matter in the Netherlands and the Dutch address registration system allows for only one name for a street, village or city to be registered officially. Whether existing Dutch names for streets, villages and cities are “frisianized”, i.e., replaced by a Frisian name, is decided by municipal governments, often after heavy debates. As a result, more than half of the villages in the Frisian-language area now officially have Frisian names, while the remaining villages and cities still have Dutch names. Municipal mergers have put areas with

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** The full report was prepared by Jasper Hogerwerf for Kadaster, the mapping and cadastral agency of the Netherlands. It will be available under document symbol GEGN.2/2021/68/CRP.68, in the language of submission only, at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/2nd_session_2021/.



Frisian and Dutch names together, making the situation even more confusing and inconsistent.

Standardization of geographical names at the national and provincial levels with central coordination of the “Frisianization” process would make it possible to resolve the current deadlock. A key improvement would be to enable the registration of streets, villages and cities under two official names, so that both the Frisian and the Dutch names are official. Such an approach would abolish the need to make sensitive choices between the two names and would serve to recognize the bilingual reality of a province in which more than half of the population have Frisian and slightly less than half have Dutch or a related dialect as their mother tongue.
