

**Twenty-fourth Session**  
New York, 20 and 31 August 2007

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda  
**Report of the working groups**

### **Report of the Working Group on Pronunciation**

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The Working Group on Pronunciation was formed in response to resolution 11 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (Berlin, 27 August - 5 September 2002), which noted that the transliteration of geographical names from the script of one language into another script, such as romanization, does not normally provide a guide to the correct pronunciation of such names by persons who are unacquainted with the source language.

### **Meetings.**

The Working Group held two meetings during the course of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of UNGEGN in Vienna in 2006 to order to agree terms of reference and to draw up a work plan to implement these. A further meeting planned for Spring 2007 to finalise details relating to its work plan was unable to proceed.

### **Pronunciation Guides to geographical names.**

The working group addressed the question of national pronunciation guides to geographical names and noted the recommendations on this issue set out in Working Paper No. 6, 'A Basic Model for Pronunciation Guides', presented by the East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic) at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of UNGEGN. It was agreed that the Working Group should call on all countries to prepare national pronunciation guides to their geographical and to submit these to the working group, who would make them available to other users.

### **Representation of pronunciation in guides.**

The working group was in agreement that the pronunciation of sounds in the guides should be represented in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), as the international standard. In order to facilitate users unfamiliar with IPA symbols, the guides would include examples of the sounds in the user language, e.g. in English, French etc., as is the common practice in bilingual dictionaries.

### **Pronunciation of individual geographical names.**

The working group accepted that, due to the complex nature of the subject, pronunciation tables did not give a true guide to the pronunciation of an individual geographical name. There was a need, therefore, for pronunciation guides for lists of individual names and there was agreement that this need could be addressed by the inclusion of a guide to pronunciation in national gazetteers and web-based databases, with the pronunciation being represented in IPA notation as recommended above, or in audio files in the case of websites. It was noted that several national gazetteers, those of Sweden and Ireland for example, include guides to pronunciation of individual names in IPA script.

### **Spoken representation of pronunciation.**

The Working Group welcomed the inclusion of an audio pronunciation element in the planned United Nations web-based toponymic database and recognized the advantages of audio pronunciation guides in national web-based databases.

### **Working Group website.**

It was accepted that the creation of a website was essential to the promotion of the aims of the Working Group and it was agreed that this issue should be addressed as a matter of priority. The website was necessary for the publication of the national standard pronunciation guides. The website would also supply information on guides to the pronunciation of lists of individual names, such as printed gazetteers, and provide links to websites containing audio pronunciation guides to names.

### **Work plan.**

There is a need for the Working Group to agree a plan of work to address all the issues relating to pronunciation of geographical names touched on above which would specify practical means for addressing these. The plan would provide guidelines for the preparation of national pronunciation tables of geographical names and address the issue of the representation of sounds in such tables, on the question of the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in particular. The plan would also address the question of cooperation with other Working Groups, in particular, the Working Group on Romanization Systems, and the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers