

**Resolutions from the Tenth United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names, 2012, New York\***

---

\* Submitted by UNGEGN Secretariat

## Chapter III

### Resolutions adopted by the Conference

#### **X/1. Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

*The Conference,*

*Noting* the achievements and the progress made in the work of standardization of geographical names at the national and international levels,

*Noting also* the essential role played by the present Conference and by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its twenty-seventh session,

*Recognizing* the necessity of continuing this important work with the support of the Economic and Social Council,

1. *Recommends* to the Economic and Social Council that the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names be convened in 2017;

2. *Also recommends* to the Council that the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names be convened in the first half of 2014;

3. *Invites* the Bureau of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to initiate a process of reflection on how to further improve the working methods of the Conference and its report for the next session.

#### **X/2. Organization of the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the Asian Continent**

*The Conference,*

*Noting* that thus far the sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names have been held in Europe, North America and once in Africa,

*Noting also* the need for greater progress for many Asian countries in the field of standardization of geographical names,

*Recognizing* that the majority of Asian countries experience difficulties in participating in sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in Europe or North America,

*Affirming* the important role of geographical names in economic, social and cultural development, particularly in the developing countries,

*Recommends* that the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names be held on the Asian continent, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, at a United Nations duty station, provided that the necessary support facilities, including for interpretation in the six official languages of the United Nations, are made available.

### **X/3. Criteria for establishing and evaluating the nature of geographical names as cultural heritage**

*The Conference,*

*Noting* the existence of a number of resolutions that address toponymy as part of a nation's cultural heritage and the necessity to preserve toponymic heritage,

*Recalling* recommendation C of its resolution I/4 on the principles of office treatment of geographical names,

*Considering* that, to develop these principles, it is recommended that unnecessary changes to geographical names should be avoided and that the treatment of names should not result in the suppression of significant toponymic elements,

*Considering* also that none of these principles describe how to recognize a name that should be protected for its cultural heritage qualities,

*Recommends* that, to recognize and protect such a geographical name or a corpus of geographical names, the following criteria be used:

(a) The age of a name, as indicated by the date of the oldest possible record of the name;

(b) The resilience of a name, as indicated by the duration of its continued use up to the present or by its notable capacity to transcend history;

(c) The rarity of a name or of a toponymic phenomenon pointed out by the name;

(d) The "testimoniality" of a name, or its capacity to clearly embody a cultural, geographical, historical, social or other reality that is specific to the place and an essential component of local, regional or national identity;

(e) The appeal of a name, which corresponds to a feeling of belonging associated with the name and the place it designates;

(f) The imageability of a name, or its capacity to inspire ideas or strong, rich images within users, without these images or ideas necessarily referring to history or local trivia.

### **X/4. Discouraging the commercialization of geographical names**

*The Conference,*

*Recognizing* that the use of geographical names that seek a commercial purpose and the buying and selling of geographical names are practices that exist, especially in urban areas,

*Considering* that these practices transform the places and names they affect into commodities that will likely promote the replacement of geographical names with long-standing local usage and threaten the integrity of geographical nomenclatures of nations,

*Recalling* its resolution VIII/9, in which it recognized the importance of geographical names as part of a nation's historical and cultural heritage, and its resolution IX/4, in which it recognized that geographical names

were part of the intangible cultural heritage, within the meaning of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 17 October 2003,

*Noting* that, in the Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, it is stated that commercial activities should not threaten the viability of the intangible cultural heritage and that particular attention should be paid to avoiding commercial misappropriation and to ensuring that the commercial use does not distort the meaning and purpose of the intangible cultural heritage for the community concerned,

*Considering* that the use of geographical names that seek a commercial purpose and the buying and selling of geographical names are practices that harm the stability of geographical names with long-standing local usage and threaten the quality of the names as useful geographical references,

*Noting* that, on the one hand, a number of geographical names generated from commercial practices also have a long-standing local usage and serve as effective reference points and that, on the other hand, a number of geographical names with long-standing local usage were named spontaneously by users of the territory owing to a company's presence in the area,

*Noting also* that some toponymic authorities around the world have already adopted standards to limit or prohibit such commercial toponymic practices,

*Recommends* that national toponymic authorities discourage the designation of geographical names that seek a commercial purpose, as well as various practices involving the commercialization of geographical names, by adopting standards that address these issues.

#### **X/5. Split of the Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division into the Asia South-East Division and the Pacific South-West Division**

*The Conference,*

*Considering* that the Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division is, with twenty-two members, the largest Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, and noting that the high number of members has significantly impeded decision-making and the implementation of geographic naming activities,

*Noting* that, at its twenty-seventh session, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names agreed to split the Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division into the Asia South-East Division and the Pacific South-West Division,

*Recommends* that the Asia South-East Division and the Pacific South-West Division be granted full recognition as linguistic/geographical divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

## **X/6. Romanization of Belarusian geographical names**

*The Conference,*

*Noting* that in Belarus a system of romanization for Belarusian geographical names was adopted in 2000 and was revised in 2007,

*Recognizing* that the system is linguistically sound and that it has been implemented in maps and gazetteers of Belarus,

*Recommends* that the system, as set out in the conference room paper entitled “The Roman alphabet transliteration of Belarusian geographical names”,<sup>1</sup> be adopted as the international system for the romanization of Belarusian geographical names.

## **X/7. Romanization of Bulgarian geographical names**

*The Conference,*

*Recognizing* that the romanization system for Bulgarian geographical names adopted by the Conference in its resolution III/10 is no longer used in Bulgaria,

*Recognizing also* that since 1999 Bulgaria has implemented another system of romanization, which was finalized and officially adopted in 2009 by the Transliteration Act and is now widely implemented,

*Recalling* that the Conference, in its resolution IX/8, allowed for the relevance of any internationally adopted romanization system that was no longer implemented by sponsoring nations to be reconsidered after ten years,

*Recommends* that the system, as set out in the document entitled “Romanization system in Bulgaria”,<sup>2</sup> be adopted as the international system for the romanization of Bulgarian geographical names.

## **X/8. Romanization of Iranian geographical names**

*The Conference,*

*Recognizing* that the romanization system for geographical names adopted by the Conference in its resolution I/13 is no longer used in the Islamic Republic of Iran,

*Recognizing also* that over a period of more than twenty years a system of romanization called “broad transcription” has been developed for Persian and is now implemented in the national geographical names database and administrative divisions maps of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

*Noting* that the original Persian script forms of Iranian geographical names are available in the national geographical names database and the transliterated forms will be available in the same database,

*Noting also* that, because more implementation of this system is needed and a suitable transitional period will be required before the system

---

<sup>1</sup> The conference room papers are available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/uncsgnungegn/ungegnConf10.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See E/CONF.101/12/Add.1. The full text of the document is available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/uncsgnungegn/ungegnConf10.html>.

can be fully implemented at the international level, the Islamic Republic of Iran should provide practical assistance to receiver countries for that purpose,

*Recalling* that the Conference, in its resolution IX/8, allowed for the relevance of any internationally adopted romanization system that was no longer implemented by sponsoring nations to be reconsidered after ten years,

*Recommends* that the “broad transcription” system, as set out in the document entitled “New Persian romanization system”,<sup>3</sup> be adopted as the international system for the romanization of Iranian geographical names.

#### **X/9. Romanization of Ukrainian geographical names**

*The Conference,*

*Recognizing* that in 2010 Ukraine officially adopted a system of romanization for geographical names, which revised a system used since 1996,

*Recognizing also* that, although not fully reversible, the system has nevertheless been well implemented in maps, gazetteers and databases of Ukraine, as well as on public signs and in spheres of life other than those concerning geographical names,

*Recommends* that the system, as set out in the document entitled “Romanization system in Ukraine”,<sup>4</sup> be adopted as the international system for the romanization of Ukrainian geographical names.

#### **X/10. Support for the work on the standardization of geographical names**

*The Conference,*

*Recognizing* the positive results achieved by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names,

*Considering* that, during the period between United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the Group of Experts is the only body within the United Nations system dealing with problems relating to geographical names at the international level,

*Wishing* to ensure that the activities of the Group of Experts are maximized at all times and to consolidate those programmes that most effectively promote national and international standardization,

*Recommends* that, with the continued support of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names continue to pursue actively its responsibilities as defined in its statute and in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the present and past Conferences.

---

<sup>3</sup> See E/CONF.101/118/Add.1. The full text of the document is available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/uncsgnungegn/ungegnConf10.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See E/CONF.101/84/Add.1. The full text of the document is available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/uncsgnungegn/ungegnConf10.html>.

**X/11. Web-based course in toponymy**

*The Conference,*

*Recognizing* the growing need for training qualified personnel for toponymic tasks, in view of the increasingly important role of standardized toponyms in national spatial data infrastructures,

*Recognizing also* that only a few countries are able to provide for specialized toponymic education,

*Noting* that the number of participants in international toponymy courses is limited and that those trained frequently move to other jobs,

*Recommends* that a web-based course in toponymy, developed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy and the International Cartographic Association with financial support from the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, be incorporated and maintained on the website of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, in order to contribute to the basic education and training of toponymic staff.

**X/12. Expression of thanks**

*The Conference,*

1. Extends its heartfelt thanks to the United Nations for the excellent arrangements and services provided for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

2. Expresses its particular gratitude to the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat for its excellent organization of Conference-related matters and of the associated technical exhibition;

3. Expresses its gratitude to the President of the Conference and the Chairs of the technical committees for the effective way in which they conducted the meetings;

4. Expresses its appreciation to the officers of the Conference and technical committees and to the officers and staff of the Statistics Division for their hard work and dedication, which greatly facilitated the business of the Conference.