

Twenty-second Session
New York, 20-29 April 2004

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TRAINING COURSES IN TOPONYMY

Training Course in Toponymy
Enschede, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin
11 August – 6 September 2002*

*Submitted by: Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN)
(Permanent committee on geographical names)

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The United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) have observed for many years, that Developing Countries are in a considerable need for expertise in topographic mapping, collection of geographical names in the field, developing and maintaining geographical names data bases, and standardizing of geographical names, nationally and internationally.

The Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy of UNGEGN has initiated several such training courses in various countries. However, these courses were somewhat deficient because the participants of those courses did not have a chance to attend United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names or sessions of UNGEGN. Furthermore, these conferences and sessions were only attended by few members from Developing Countries.

Therefore, the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1998) passed Resolution VII/12, which “encourages the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy of UNGEGN to consider organizing short advanced training courses on the subject of the standardization of geographical names to adjoin meetings of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.”

In pursuance of that resolution the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, as host of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the Twenty-first Session of UNGEGN, held in Berlin in 2002, put itself forward to offer a training course in toponymy for Developing Countries, in conjunction with these events. The course was financed jointly by the United Nations and the Governments of The Netherlands and Germany, and was held in Enschede, Frankfurt am Main and Berlin.

The venues of this particular training course had been carefully selected: the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) in Enschede, The Netherlands, has been training staff from Developing Countries in the mapping sciences since the 1950s. The tasks of the Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie (BKG, Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy) in Frankfurt am Main consist inter alia of safeguarding the standardization of geographical names in the Federal Republic of Germany at a national and international level. Together, these two institutions provided a stimulating environment for a training course in toponymy.

This course was special in the sense that it was for the first time that course participants could experience how the naming policies were actually implemented at a United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Most importantly, course participants were given the chance to forge contacts with colleagues. It was expected that this would provide additional feedback and enhance the subject matter of the course. There was ample opportunity for the 20 participants from 17 countries (BG, BT, GN, IN, IR, LS, MG, MN, MZ, NG, NP, ST, UG, TZ, VU, ZA, ZM) as there were some 280 representatives from about 90 Member States attending the conference. Apart from the conference itself, its papers and discussions, there was a special

exhibition in Berlin as well, that shed further light on the toponymical issues that have been resolved in the past as well as on those that are still subject to the decision-making process.

A detailed report on this course is currently being prepared and will be ready shortly. It will be published by the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, as Volume 28 of the series "Mitteilungen des Bundesamtes für Kartographie und Geodäsie". This publication is intended for perusal by the attendees and may serve as a template for future organizers of such courses.