

11 July 2017

Original: English

**Eleventh United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 8-17 August 2017

Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

**Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations
resolutions on the standardization of geographical names,
including the economic and social benefits**

**Activities of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation
in taking measures to implement UNCSGN resolutions**

Submitted by the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation**

* E/CONF.105/1.

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Activities of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation in taking measures to implement UNCSGN resolutions¹

SUMMARY

The paper reports on the activities of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation in taking measures to implement resolutions adopted at the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. As designated and recommended by the UNGEGN statute and several resolutions, the implementation of resolutions is one of the primary tasks and responsibilities that the UNGEGN should continue to actively pursue. The Working Group has continued to attract attention from experts to relating their work to resolutions. In this stream, several measures have been taken, including providing documentation guidelines, surveying on the restriction to implementation, organizing a workshop, as well as maintaining a resolutions database.

Background

The statute of the UNGEGN stipulates the tasks of the UNGEGN in implementing resolutions. It includes the following:

I. Aims

The basic aims of the Group of Experts are:

(g) To implement the tasks assigned as a result of the resolutions adopted at United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

III. Functions

Functions of the Group of Experts are:

2. ...to provide leadership in the implementation of resolutions adopted at the Conferences.

This status has been emphasized by several resolutions, including;

Resolution IV/24

The Conference recommends that the UNGEGN should continue to encourage the Geographical/Linguistic Divisions to be more active in implementing the decisions of the UNCSGN, as applicable, in working out reporting schedules on their activities to all States within their Divisions and to the UNGEGN.

Resolution V/4

The Conference recommends that the UNGEGN continue to pursue actively its responsibilities as defined in its statute and in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the present Conference; recommends also that a working group be established within the Group to review the resolutions adopted by the United

¹ This working paper pertains to the UNCSGN resolutions V/4 (Work performed by the UNGEGN and its future activities), VI/4 (Working group on evaluation), IV/24 (Divisional activities) and V/2 (Statute of the UNGEGN).

Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and report on their implementation;

According to resolution V/4, the original Working Group on Evaluation was established in 1987. Once disbanded in the 1990s, it was re-established in 2000 as the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation in order to continue the evaluation of the UNGEGN and the Conferences. One of the mandates of the Working Group, as its name specifies, has been to evaluate the implementation of resolutions.

At the Working Group meeting in 2008, there was a discussion on conducting a survey to assess the extent of implementation and effectiveness of resolutions, with reference to the working paper reported at the 15th Session in 1991 by the former Working Group which was based on a survey to experts. A consensus was reached that, before progressing into a further study on resolutions, it would be useful to develop a user-friendly web-structured access to resolutions. Subsequently, a database of resolutions was created in 2009.

UNCSGN resolutions database

The web-based database of UNCSGN resolutions provides a useful engine to search resolutions by Conference, subject and key words. As its source material is the document titled “Resolutions adopted at the ten United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names: 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2007, 2012,” prepared by Natural Resources Canada, the 26 subject headings of this document is also used for the database. Some of the resolutions belong to more than one subject heading.

Three language versions of the database have been in service; English (since 2009), French (since 2012) and Spanish (since 2015). The database is hosted by the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea (<http://www.ngii.go.kr/portal/ungn/mainEn.do>) and accessible from the UNGEGN web-page at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/confGeneral.html>. The database will be updated to include resolutions which will be adopted at the 11th Conference.

As the Arabic text of resolutions are now prepared by the Arabic Division, the task of loading it onto the database system will begin in an appropriate time frame with the technical and financial support of the NGII.

Working papers on implementing resolutions

Since the 8th Conference, the UNGEGN Chair and Secretariat have reported on the actions taken on resolutions adopted at the previous conference (E/CONF.94/CRP.93; E/CONF.98/79; E/CONF.101/3; E/CONF.105/3). Actions for various substantive resolutions have been noted as the responsibility of working groups or individual member states.

In order to motivate UNGEGN experts to refer to the resolutions in their work, the Working Group suggested that each working paper should be requested to indicate the resolution(s) that relates to its theme by the documentation guidelines for the Conference and the Session. This suggestion has been put in action since the 28th Session.

The degree of referring to resolutions, however, is not yet high. An examination of the working papers

presented at the 28th and 29th Session shows that just 41.8% (33 out of 79) and 36.4% (32 out of 88) of the papers referred to resolutions, respectively. Frequently referred resolutions were I/4 (national standardization), I/7 (regional meetings), V/6 (promotion of national and international geographical names standardization programs), VIII/6 (integration of geographical names data into national and regional spatial data infrastructures) and IX/7 (dissemination of information concerning the origin and meaning of geographical names). Dutch- and German-speaking Division and Norden Division organized their reporting of activities by resolutions, as did Austria and New Zealand at the 10th Conference.

The evaluation survey conducted at the 28th and 29th Session shows that the resolutions are useful for promoting geographical names standardization and implementing them is important in each country's work on geographical names. But it also informs that there are restrictions to implementing them, such as lack of awareness or understanding, lack of coordination, inadequate level of human and financial resources, specific cultural environment, and potential contradiction between resolutions, e.g., reducing exonyms versus promoting cultural heritage.

Workshop on implementing resolutions, Bangkok, April 2016

Following up on an idea developed at the Working Group meeting in Copenhagen, 2015, the Working Group organized a workshop on implementing resolutions during the 29th Session in Bangkok, 2016, with the case of commemorative naming. It was expected that sharing each country's experience of commemorative naming which included practices by the public and the private sectors, guidelines provided by names authority, and restraints to applying the relevant UNCSGN resolution would provide ideas to improve its implementation in each country's cultural, social, political, and economic contexts.

The workshop indeed fulfilled this expectation. Each country's experience of commemorative naming and its relevance to the resolution, elaborated for Austria, Finland, Republic of Korea, Sweden and Tunisia, showed there are commonalities and peculiarities. Commemorative naming practices are commonly found in all countries presented with some conspicuous types; naming after historical figures, governors or politicians, classic or modern musicians, civil workers, sports stars, and many others. The UNCSGN resolution VIII/2 on commemorative naming is generally effective in guiding the naming authorities of each country; discouraging naming after living persons and setting up the "waiting period." Despite these guidelines, there are still cases in which names of living persons are adopted. Political motivation sometimes works, which is often unavoidable. The waiting period has variations; from five (Austria, Finland) to thirty years (Republic of Korea). Persons to be commemorated should have a relation with the feature about to be named (Austria). Materials and related references presented at the workshop are available at the UNGEGN website: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/wg7.html>

Further orientation toward implementing resolutions

The Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation hopes to continuously encourage UNGEGN experts to relate their work to resolutions and report the results at subsequent meetings. The task may be feasible by maintaining the current logistical measures such as reminding documentation guidelines and providing the resolutions database. When some prior conditions are met, a few additional works can be initiated by the Working Group, including conducting a survey on resolutions, performing a thorough review of resolutions, and conducting substantive studies on resolutions. The workshop on implementing

resolutions is expected to be extended into other topics, such as the commercial use of geographical names, preservation of geographical names with cultural heritage values, and many more. Comments and suggestions on how to make further progress on implementing resolutions are welcome.