

**Twenty-seventh session
30 July and 10 August 2012, New York**

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

Reports of the liaison officers.

SCAR Composite Gazetteer Antarctica *

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SCAR Composite Gazetteer Antarctica

Report to UNGEGN June 2012

From the [Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty](#):

Since 1959, thirty-eight other countries have acceded to the Treaty. According to Art. IX.2, they are entitled to participate in the Consultative Meetings during such times as they demonstrate their interest in Antarctica by “conducting substantial research activity there”. Sixteen of the acceding countries have had their activities in Antarctica recognized according to this provision, and consequently there are now twenty-eight Consultative Parties in all. The other twenty-two Non-Consultative Parties are invited to attend the Consultative Meetings but do not participate in the decision-making.

The SCAR Composite gazetteer Antarctica (SCAR CGA) does not have any legal standing as there isn't an Antarctic naming authority. To put it in the terms of the SCAR Delegates Assembly 2008, the SCAR CGA “is a product, compiled purely for the convenience of the SCAR community and has no legal authority or standing. It is a digital application that collects and compiles place names, location of names and descriptions of names in Antarctica, provided by the national names committees of nations active in Antarctica, for a range of purposes”.

Since 2008, Italy and Australia jointly administer the [SCAR Composite Gazetteer Antarctica](#), (SCAR CGA) with Italy taking care of the compilation and editing and the Australian Antarctic Data Centre maintaining the database and website. The SCAR Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information (SC-AGI) coordinates the project. Names from twenty three (23) countries are represented in the SCAR CGA.

Toponymy

On the one hand, the toponymy in Antarctica bears some likeness to the naming of international waters but on the other, partly due to political and historical factors – various countries have shown different approaches to the problem. Different languages, even alphabets were used and in some cases multiple naming of features occurred.

On the 1st March 2012 there were 36,727 place names for 18720 features, however, only 4% of features have substantially different names. Some national gazetteers include undersea feature names but these represent only a very small number of names in the SCAR CGA and a very few of the names in the [GEBCO undersea feature gazetteer](#).

In conclusion, the SCAR CGA, is the most complete and updated list (as much as practicable) of existing place names in Antarctica. In nearly twenty years it has contributed to the awareness that toponymy in Antarctica, even if left to the choice of any single country, can't be fully arbitrary. On the contrary, an internationally recognized body, SCAR SC-AGI, coordinates and recommends the standard of the toponymy.

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6 June 2012

ANNEX

Relationship of National Antarctic Gazetteers to the [SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica](#)

The SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica (SCAR CGA) is a product, compiled purely for the convenience of the SCAR community and has no legal authority or standing. It is a digital application that collects and compiles place names, locations of names and descriptions of names in Antarctica provided by national names committees of nations active in Antarctica, for a range of purposes.

1. The SCAR CGA is a tool with content such that any contained place names can be:
 - incorporated into any Geographic Information System (GIS) or internet mapping service for map production purposes,
 - used for reference purposes in tasks that require a common understanding of location,
 - used for any purpose that requires a user to identify a place where individual nations have assigned different names to the same Antarctic feature.
2. To provide these services effectively requires that the SCAR CGA:
 - accurately portrays the information for names in any given national gazetteer,
 - uses a database identifier for the purpose of database management, and
 - reaches in due time, a content with a known level of accuracy.
3. It should be noted that the National Names Committees:
 - are the sole authorities for names in Antarctica,
 - act as governing authorities for Antarctic place names,
 - direct the use of particular names on national mapping products,
 - confer any legal or statutory authority over the names in their national gazetteers,
 - assign preferred names to features.
4. The SCAR CGA acts only on the information provided by the National Names Committees.

Henk Brolsma
Chairman
SCAR Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information
26 June 2008