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English only

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

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 17 (b) of the provisional agenda*

**Toponymic education and practice and international
cooperation: training courses in toponymy**

**Training course in toponymy
(Enschede, Frankfurt am Main and Berlin,
11 August-6 September 2002)**

Submitted by Germany**

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** Submitted by the Dutch- and German-speaking Division. Prepared by Knut Hans Stabe,
Wiesbaden, and Jörn Sievers, Chairman, Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN).

Date and organization of the course

In pursuance of Resolution VII/12 of the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, a training course in toponymy was organized in conjunction with the current Twenty-first Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The course is lasting for four weeks from 11 August to 6 September 2002. It has been held in Enschede, The Netherlands in the first week and in Frankfurt am Main, Germany in the second week. During the third and fourth weeks, course participants are attending the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, and the Twenty-first Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), Berlin, being held from 26 August to 6 September 2002.

The course has been organized, in co-operation with the Dutch- and German-speaking Division of the UNGEGN, by a Project Group established at the Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie (Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy) in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Aims of the course

The aims of the course were:

- To provide Developing Countries with information on the establishment or the strengthening of “names authorities” that can deal with national geographical names in general, with names collection, names surveys, national names standardization, the preparation of a gazetteer and/or a digital toponymic data base. Such a data base could become part of a national geographic information system (GIS);
- To introduce participants to the above activities through theory and practical applications;
- To consider international aspects of the work of geographical names, such as romanization systems and the use of foreign names;
- To enable participants to attend the session of the UNGEGN and the Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in Berlin, immediately following the first two weeks of the course.

Invitation to apply

The Project Group sent announcement letters to potential “national names authorities” in Developing Countries as well as to some possible candidates for the course. The mailing list was provided by the UNGEGN Secretariat and complemented by ITC. The letter contained a questionnaire/application form which had to be filled in and returned by interested and qualified candidates.

Who should have applied for the course?

At the course it was planned to have about 24 female and male participants, who should come from Developing Countries, preferably countries that have not previously sent participants to similar courses and that have had little or no representation at Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names or at Sessions of the UNGEGN. This course was not intended for those already in managerial positions in their own country. Female candidates were particularly encouraged to apply for participation in the course. Applicants for the course were required to meet, as far as possible, the following criteria:

- Be a citizen/resident of a Developing Country;
- Be a graduate in cartography, geography, or linguistics;
- Have an appropriate command of the English language;
- Be no more than 35 years of age;

- Work in their home country in an organization, institute, authority or agency that deals or will deal in one way or another with national and international standardization of geographical names (such as: collection of geographical names, correct spelling of names, origin of names, preparation of lists of names or gazetteers, the use of foreign names in the national language, or the use of romanized place names in countries using a non-roman writing system).

In some countries such an institution for names standardization might not yet exist, but the country may intend to establish one in the near future. If an applicant is being considered to assist in establishing that institution, he or she was considered to be a good candidate for the training course;

- Have some basic experience in field work and have acquired some knowledge of toponymy;
- Have a basic knowledge in computer techniques (as background to building a geographical names data file).

Additional assets for course participation were:

- Have some knowledge and experience working with data bases or with Geographical Information Systems (GIS);
- Be in a position, on returning to his/her home country, to transfer to others the lessons learned at the training course;
- Be eligible to participate in the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) and to become a member of his/her country's delegation to the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in Berlin.

Selection procedure of candidates

Candidates for the course were selected by a Selection Committee based upon the criteria listed above. The Selection Committee consisted of:

- Director-General, Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy, Frankfurt am Main;
- Chair, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN);
- Chairman, UNGEGN Working Group Training Courses in Toponymy;
- Chairman, Organizing Committee Eighth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names 2002;
- Co-ordinator, Training Course in Toponymy.

Some details about the course and its location

The first week of the course was devoted to the theory of toponymy and took place at the International Institute for Aerospace Survey and Earth Sciences (ITC) in Enschede, The Netherlands. Prof. Ferjan Ormeling, the Convenor of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy of the UNGEGN, organized and oversaw the lectures to be held. Topics such as models and procedures of national agencies, writing systems in different languages, field collection systems, exonyms, and toponymic guidelines were presented and discussed.

The second week of the course consisted of practical field work near Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Participants received a topographic map with the geographical names missing. In small groups, and accompanied by German speakers, they collected names for different features, such as villages, watercourses, mountains, and individual buildings. Local residents, as well as local officials, were consulted by the participants in the names collection process.

At the third and fourth week, training course participants were attending the Twenty-first Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) and the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, in Berlin either as members of their national delegation or as observers.

This attendance should offer them the possibility of gaining experience in the work of international standardization of geographical names as recommended by the United Nations as well as establishing international contacts.

Financing of the Training Course

The course was jointly financed by the United Nations (Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) and by the Governments of The Netherlands and Germany.
