



## Economic and Social Council

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### Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

New York, 31 July-9 August 2012

Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*

**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity  
(including indigenous, minority and regional language names)**

### **The Arab Spring and the toponymic changes: Arab Spring — Toponymic Spring?**

**Submitted by the Arabic Division\*\***

#### **Summary\*\*\***

The report addresses toponymic issues after the Arab Spring. It is thus analysed in the context of the impact of the Arab Spring on the management of place names and the recorded changes in general and the new names, whether spontaneous or official in particular.

If the names in the past depended only on physical characteristics, today they are much more the result of political systems. This is particularly true regarding societies that are called undemocratic; in these societies it is generally the powerful of the moment who are honoured by their names being given to places. Generally it is the name of the national leader that is first attributed to locations and the most prominent buildings, followed by the names of the “fathers of the nation” and other dignitaries of the system, as well as the major events reflecting the great achievements of the regime.

In general, Arab countries have not escaped this approach.

What about the Arab revolutions? Did the Arab Spring create a new type of toponymy? If so, is it formal or spontaneous? What are the essential features of this toponymy? How have the official authorities reacted to this spontaneous toponymy, which sometimes have consequences at the international level.

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\*\*\* The full report is available in the language of submission only from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf10.html>.

