



## 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 10 of the provisional agenda\*

#### Exonyms

### Report of the Working Group on Exonyms

#### Summary\*\*

The report highlights, first of all, the five meetings held by the Working Group on Exonyms since the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, in 2007, of which three had the character of workshops lasting three days each and were devoted to paper presentations and intensive discussions. The first of them was the eighth meeting, held in Timișoara, Romania, from 9 to 11 September 2008, hosted by the West University of Timișoara, the Romanian Academy of Sciences, the Romanian Military Institute of Cartography and the Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn House, and organized in conjunction with a meeting of the International Cartographic Association Commission on National and Regional Atlases. It was followed by the tenth meeting, held in Tainach, Austria, from 28 to 30 April 2010, hosted by the Austrian Board on Geographical Names and the Catholic Educational Centre “Sodalitas”. In addition, that meeting was organized in conjunction with meetings of the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and of two divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names — the Dutch- and German-speaking Division and the East Central and South-East Europe Division. The most recent of these workshops was held in Gdańsk, Poland, as the twelfth meeting of the Working Group, from 16 to 18 May 2012, and was hosted by the Polish Main Office of Geodesy and Cartography.

The report refers to a volume of the new toponymic book series *Name and Place*, edited by Peter Jordan and Paul Woodman, entitled *Trends in Exonym Use*. It contains the proceedings of the tenth meeting of the Working Group and was edited by Peter Jordan, Hubert Bergmann, Caroline Burgess and Catherine Cheetham.

In the past five years, the main topics discussed by the Working Group were the endonym/exonym divide, guidelines and criteria for the use of exonyms as well

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\*\* The full report was prepared by Peter Jordan (Austria), Co-convenor (Convenor in charge), Working Group on Exonyms, and is available in the language of submission only from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf10.html>.



as trends in exonym use in various countries. They were the subject of intensive discussion during the above-mentioned workshops, at other meetings and in (at times frequent) e-mail communications between meetings. It was, however, not possible to arrive at final conclusions on any of these topics. It has become apparent that most members of the Working Group are dissatisfied with the current definitions of the endonym and the exonym (incorporated into the Glossary in 2007) for three main reasons:

- They highlight language as the main criterion for the endonym/exonym divide, while it is in fact only accidental and the essential criterion is the relation between population (community, identity group) and feature. However, an endonym/exonym divide can very well occur also within a given language.
- They highlight the official status of a name as a criterion, while the divide between official and unofficial status is a different matter and must not be mixed up with the endonym/exonym divide. An official name can very well be an exonym, when it is not accepted by the local population (e.g., the German name Litzmannstadt for the Polish city Łódź in the era of German occupation).
- They are not practicable for the purposes of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names standardization.

Therefore, the Working Group will first have to rediscuss the definitions of the endonym and the exonym, since they are the basis for all other decisions. Other important fields to be dealt with, but secondary to the issue of the definitions, will be the categorization of exonyms and the elaboration of guidelines for the use of exonyms. The next workshop of the Working Group will be held in spring 2013.

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