



**Economic and Social Council**

Distr : General

28 June 2007

Original: English

---

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

New York, 21 to 30 August 2007

Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports by divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts  
on Geographical Names on the situation in their divisions and  
on the progress made in the standardization of geographical  
names since the Eighth Conference**

**Report of the Norden Division (Denmark, Finland, Iceland,  
Norway, Sweden)**

**Submitted by the Norden Division\*\***

---

\* E/CONF 98/1

\*\* Prepared by Sitikka Paikkala (Chair), Teemu Leskinen (Vice Chair), UNGEGN Norden Division

## Report of the Norden Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

### General

During the period 2002-2007, the Norden Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has met annually. Altogether the five meetings have attracted over 50 participants. Meeting topics, presentations and lively discussions have dealt with various aspects of common and current interest. It is worth noticing that for the first time representatives from Iceland and also Greenland – as a part of the Danish expert group – have taken part in the Norden Division meetings and activities.

The report of Norden Division summarises the main topics discussed in the meetings held since the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

### UNGEEN Norden Division meetings 2002-2007

Since the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 2002, five UNGEEN Norden Division meetings have been held:

#### **2002, August 30<sup>th</sup>, Norden Division meeting in Berlin, Germany**

Experts from Denmark (1), Finland (2), Norway (3) and Sweden (2) attended the meeting. The main topics of the meeting included

- Plans for a Swedish publication on the work of the UNGEEN to be written by Mr Hans Ringstam, Sweden;
- Chairmanship of the Norden Division for the period 2002-2007.

#### **2003, October 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>, Norden Division meeting in Helsinki, Finland**

15 experts from Denmark (2), Finland (4), Iceland (2), Norway (3) and Sweden (4) attended the meeting. The main topics of the meeting included

- Hans Ringstam's writing on UN's activities on geographical names to be published in the Swedish National Land Survey's series on geographical names and the preservation of names (Sw. *Ortnamn och namnvård*). It would deal with the UNGEEN work on geographical names in general and from a perspective of Sweden and Norden Division in particular. In English the title is *Standardization of geographical names On the UN work on place-names* (Sw. *Standardisering av geografiska namn. Om FN s ortnamnsarbete*). A Swedish version of the UNGEEN Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names would be included;
- National reports of the Nordic countries on their place names activities since the Eighth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;
  - Denmark reported on
    - Increasing co-operation between the National Survey and Cadastre (KMS) and the University of Copenhagen related to the standardisation and treatment of geographic names;
    - Improvements in the KMS's place names Internet services;
  - Finland reported on
    - The renewed Language Act;
    - The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland's (RILF) treatment and checking of geographic names in the national topographic maps published by the National Land Survey (NLS);
    - Systematic field collection of place names organised by the NLS, the RILF and universities;
    - The Geographic Names Register of the NLS;
    - Advisory services given by the RILF on the use of Finnish, Swedish and Saami place names;
    - A book of country names in six languages to be published soon by the RILF;
    - A visit of a names experts delegation from the Ministry of Education of China to the RILF and the NLS;
    - Toponymic web-sites in Finland;
    - Recent toponymic publications and articles in Finland.
  - Iceland reported on
    - Statutory tasks of the Iceland's Place Names committee;

- New map series published by the National Land Survey and co-operation between the NLS and the Place Names Committee;
- The Icelandic Place Name Database comprising about 50,000 toponyms.
- Norway reported on
  - Proposed amendments to The Place Name Act having been in force since 1 July 1991;
  - The role of the Norwegian Mapping Authority as the national geographic names authority;
  - The establishment of a comprehensive register (SSR) of all names on different map series and charts and the Internet services based on this register;
  - The consultative tasks of the Norwegian Language Council related to the treatment and use of Norwegian, North Saami, South Saami, Lule Saami and Kvenish (Finnish) place names;
  - Collection of microtoponyms in a number of municipalities;
  - Several meetings held, attended by names experts of different organisations.
- Sweden reported on
  - Responsibilities of, and co-operation between organisations in the field of standardisation and treatment of geographic names in Sweden, especially the National Land Survey, the Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore and the National Heritage Board;
  - The National Land Survey's publication *God ortnamnsed* (Good place name practice), which gives models for place naming in rural and urban areas;
  - A Swedish Place Name Lexicon published in 2003;
  - The National Land Survey's *KartSök och ortnamn*, a public map browser in the Internet;
  - The discussion that has arisen on old Swedish civil parish names and parish divisions: should they be retained as a memory of cultural history?

#### **2004, April 26<sup>th</sup>, Norden Division meeting in New York, the UN Headquarters**

Experts from Denmark (1), Finland (2), Norway (2) and Sweden (3) attended the meeting. The main topics of the meeting included

- The Hoped-for participation of Greenland and Faroe Islands in the activities of UNGEGN and Norden Division;
- Possibilities to produce a joint data file of Saami place names of Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish mapping authorities;
- UNGEGN Dutch- and German speaking Division's initiative for a multilingual geographic names data network for Europe (EuroGeoNames);
- The statute of UNGEGN with regard to cultural heritage aspects concerning geographical names.

#### **2005, October 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, Norden Division meeting in Hønefoss and Oslo, Norway**

A two-day meeting of the Norden Division took place in Hønefoss (Statens kartverk, the Norwegian Mapping and Cadastre Authority) and Oslo (the University of Oslo) on 20 and 22 October 2005, in connection with the conference "Place-names in Nordic and International Perspective", arranged by the University of Oslo. The meeting was attended by 18 experts representing Denmark (4), Finland (3), Norway (8) and Sweden (3), and three guests, Ms. Helen Kerfoot, the Chair of UNGEGN, Ms. Zane Cekula, Baltic Division, as an observer, and Mr. Hans Ringstam, the previous Chair of the Norden Division. It is worth noticing that this was the first time that the representatives from Greenland, Mr. Carl Christian Olsen and Ms. Johanne B. Tobiassen, participated in a meeting of the Norden Division. The presentations and discussions dealt with

- Activities and focus points of Statens kartverk;
- Recent changes in the Norwegian Place-Names Act;
- The Central Place-Names Register of Norway (SSR);
- Place names on maps and in registers in Norway;
- Different web services in Norway with the opportunity to conduct searches using place names;
- The project "Norway Digital", Norwegian Government's initiative to build a national geographical infrastructure;
- The updated version of the *Toponymic Guidelines for Cartography – Norway*, based on UN recommendations;
- The EuroGeoNames project; a Letter of Support to the European Commission;

- Greenland, its history, population, languages and their statuses, as well as administration and research with regard to place names;
- Swedish civil parish names;
- Addresses, place names and legislation in Sweden;
- The situation in the Nordic countries concerning the Unesco convention on immaterial cultural heritage;
- Commemorative naming practices in the Nordic countries; an inquiry concerning UN Resolution VIII/2 and the work of UNGEGN;
- The UNGEGN Statute with regard to cultural heritage and identity aspects;
- The Nordic countries' contribution to the UNGEGN Working Group on Indigenous and Minority Group Names with regard to Saami names;
- The UNGEGN Geographical Names Database;
- Concerns about the correctness of Finnish and other place names in certain global Internet services;
- Preparations for the next UNGEGN meeting to be held in Vienna in spring 2006.

**2006, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Norden Division meeting in Vienna, the UN Office**

Ten experts from Denmark (2), Finland (2), Iceland (1), Norway (2) and Sweden (3) attended the meeting. The main topics of the meeting included

- Mr. Ari Páll Kristinsson, the Chairman of the Icelandic Place Name Committee, reported on the current situation in Iceland with regard to geographical names and their standardisation;
- Toponymic guidelines – it was strongly recommended, and also foreseen by all experts present, that every Nordic country could be able to introduce an updated version of their guidelines at the ninth conference;
- The pronunciation of place names in different Nordic languages; Sweden reported that Radio Sweden, since about ten years, has got an Internet service where pronunciation of about 3000 place names is available for their announcers, radio and TV reporters etc. Hopefully this will, within a year or two, also be publicly accessible on the Internet;
- A world-wide questionnaire by the UNGEGN on the situation and status of indigenous and minority language place names in different countries;
- The EuroGeoNames project with regard to Saami names;
- Norden Division preparations for the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference on the Standardization of Geographical names and the 24<sup>th</sup> session of UNGEGN;
- Chairmanship of the Norden Division for the period 2007-2012.

Sirkka Paikkala (Chair), Teemu Leskinen (Vice Chair), UNGEGN Norden Division