

## **Trobada d'autoritats mundials en toponímia**

Intervenció de la directora general de Política Lingüística, senyora Yvonne Griley

### Obertura de la sessió (text català)

Bona tarda a tothom i benvinguts a aquesta sessió de treball que té l'objectiu de debatre sobre els diferents models d'autoritat en matèria de toponímia existents arreu del món.

### Obertura de la sessió (text anglès)

Good afternoon to everybody and welcome to this Meeting of National Authorities in Toponymy. As you already know, the aim of this working session will be to debate about the different types of Toponymy Authorities existing around the world in order to share good practices and reach to know how these different models work and organize themselves.

First of all, I would like to thank, in the name of the Catalan Government and of the Toponymy Committee of Catalonia, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, here represented by Miss Helen Kerfoot, for its participation in this Meeting, and give special thanks to Mr. Peter Jordan for his implication in the organization of this event.

Secondly, I'd like to say that my gratitude goes beyond an institutional formality: this International Conference about Onomastic Sciences is the first one that takes places in Catalonia in the 21st century. And that represents for us a great opportunity to share our work and experience in this field with the international scientific community.

When we talk about language, we are not always capable of getting to know the nature of the good we have at hand. Language is an inheritance of its speakers: it's a tangible, cultural, national, personal, existential inheritance. The people of Catalonia and the Government representing them have the sovereignty to decide the proper nouns of daily life. In the case of Toponymy, this sovereignty is exercised through a specific body, the Toponymy Committee of Catalonia, which is the result, as you will see, of collaboration between academic and administrative bodies. And we work for the excellence, with the conviction that our past, present and future task means a significant contribution to the cultural inheritance of the world.

The presence of different academic and institutional authorities in this working session makes it obvious that there are different ways of organizing territories and also different models of organizing the authority in relation to the language. In my opinion, it is necessary to preserve the specific regional and national characteristics of each territory, especially the daily denomination of place names as it is something really close to its inhabitants. The fact that the competent organisms on these subjects work under international criteria, facilitates the balance between science and traditional usage, of course. But, at the same time, it is important to ensure that these organisms are well represented in the international bodies. So, I take my chance to share with you my conviction that states and organizations of states should reflect on these representations and on the best way of conducting and managing them.

And, now, with no more preambles, I give the floor to Miss Helen Kerfoot, who is, as you know, the Chair of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and an Emeritus Scientist at Natural Resources Canada in Ottawa.