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Geographical Names

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REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Report of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding

Submitted by the Convenor of the Working Group,
Dr. Richard R. Randall, United States of America

**REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
WORKING GROUP ON PUBLICITY AND FUNDING.**

Submitted by Dr. Richard R. Randall, United States of America,
Convenor of the Working Group.
June 7, 1994.

Introduction. The 16th session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) created a Working Group on Publicity and Funding (WGPF)* to develop a program to promote the work of the United Nations as well as those of national and other international organizations to standardize names. An inherent part of the program was to identify funding at various levels to carry out activities encouraged by the Working Group. At the close of the 16th UNGEGN, a group met to discuss the program and to agree to submit ideas at a later time. Art Ó Moalfabhail (Ireland), who could not attend all of the sessions, sent comments soon after the meeting. Early in May of 1994, I circulated papers to members of the WGPF, Dr. Peter Raper (South Africa and Chairman of the UNGEGN), and others that covered various points and included a publicity brochure initially drafted by Dr. Ferjan Ormeling, Jr. (Netherlands) but modified by me. I requested comments, if possible, prior to the 17th UNGEGN. Late in May, Helen Kerfoot (Canada) sent a detailed outline of possible actions. This Working Paper summarizes topics covered by the cited papers, forwards the brochure as an Attachment, and offers an outline for further activities.

Definition. The name of the Working Group includes activities related both to publicity and funding. It could be presumed that the words cover a common topic, and in essence that is true. But each word also can have different application. This report will discuss them in both perspectives.

Publicity. The word "publicity" covers a very broad range of activities which can be supported by the United Nations and by national and other organizations. Below is a summary of possible functions.

United Nations. The United Nations possibly can publish and circulate the following items to individuals and agencies as requested and justified.

1. The brochure and other documents yet to be prepared, such as a book on names standardization.
2. A list of members attending United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

* Members of the WGPF are Helen Kerfoot (Canada), H.A.G. Lewis (UK), Art Ó Moalfabhail (Ireland), Ernest Spiess (Switzerland), and Anki Mattison (Sweden).

3. The UNGEGN Newsletter.
4. A list of United Nations resolutions on names standardization (with commentary as to application).
5. The statement of Aims and Functions.
6. Press releases for all conferences and sessions.
7. Press releases on new names of countries or other entities.
8. Videos of relevant activities.

Such efforts, of course, require the WGPF to meet with appropriate United Nations offices to describe the rationale and benefits of activities and to obtain their willingness to implement specified actions. Among factors requiring agreement is the source of necessary funds to publish and circulate items. For example, a book on United Nations names programs will presumably require securing the services of an author. Furthermore, guidelines will be needed for the number of items provided without cost versus those available for sale. Given the demand placed on the United Nations for many services and publications, any items on names should be carefully selected for practical value and significance to users.

National Publicity. While the United Nations is a natural body to publicize names work, nations must realize it is to their individual benefit to support publicity programs. In fact, in a number of cases it is at the national level where most of the attention should be focussed because there are many people who do not realize the important role names play in a range of local and national affairs. It is clearly a responsibility of national cartographic agencies and publishers to have access to accurate names. If such organizations do not give adequate attention to names, maps, charts, tourist guides, reference works, and news stories will suffer. A well-designed publicity program at the national level can prompt citizens to demand quality names information in maps and news articles.

Publicity can be generated by a variety of radio, press, and TV media, but someone outside of those areas may need to initiate a program. Topics could vary from names of unusual interest to more academic subjects such as the historical or linguistic development of local names. A critical news article could focus attention on an incorrect local name and the problem it could cause. While somewhat apart from publicity, schools could also develop sessions dealing with names as part of an expanded course in geography. Persons active in United Nations programs are in a good position to initiate various programs. For example, if a person submits a report to the Newsletter of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, that individual should circulate copies to a wide audience in his or her country to help assure maximum exposure to global names activities.

International Organizations. In addition to the United Nations, several kinds of international organizations already are involved in geographic names. The Pan American Institute on Geography and History (PAIGH) has sponsored effective publicity through a series of annual courses on geographic names. The purpose of the courses is to promote the creation or improvement of national names agencies, but an overall

benefit has been to generate favorable publicity. Sessions of the International Congress on Onomastic Sciences for many years have included papers and discussions on names. The International Hydrographic Office has a program on names of undersea features that also generates publicity. The International Cartographic Association can encourage members and their agencies to adopt a policy favoring names programs. Other professional or institutional societies, many of which have international membership, can also promote names. The American Name Society and its journal, Names, can play a useful role. In the US, the National Geographic Society and its magazine can also create favorable publicity for the field of geographic names. Members of such organizations involved in United Nations names programs or other activities should submit articles about names and should call for actions to support standardization programs.

Funding. As indicated, funding necessarily includes any publicity programs. But funding also can deal with a broader context of geographic names to include, as an example, courses on names. Can the United Nations subsidize courses for the benefit of various countries? Can regional organizations such as PAIGH play a similar role? Can the World Bank support national efforts to establish names agencies? Can individuals or foundations provide funding to create academic courses in universities, provide scholarships for such courses, or publish books? Numerous funding options may be available, and it is the task of the WFPF to explore this area.

Action Program. To promote the tasks of the WGPF, the following actions are recommended during the 17th UNGEGN.

1. Mission actions

- * Adopt WGPF program as indicated above.

Prepare a WGPF proposal calling for the United Nations to support publicity and funding.

Identify existing national or international programs on publicity and funding. Identify individuals responsible for such actions. Individuals prepare a report for the record.

- * Develop a program to address other national and international publicity and funding requirements.

- * Identify methods (e.g., books, TV, radio) for generating publicity.

- * Identify sources of funding (e.g., official agencies).

2. Program actions.

- * Identify individuals willing to promote publicity and funding activities as indicated above.

- * Individuals report on actions by specified dates.

- * Convenor of WGPF coordinate all actions, report periodically to members and to chairman of UNGEGN, and prepare summary for inclusion in Newsletter.

PUBLICATIONS ON NAMES

The UN and participating nations have produced an impressive library of documents. In addition to UN and UNGEGN papers, the UN publishes a newsletter, and member states have produced gazetteers and guidelines about national naming practices.

SIXTH
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

ON THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

New York, 25 Aug.-3 Sep. 1992

Vol. 1, Report of the Conference

UNITED NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Newsletter

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TOPONYMIC
GUIDELINES
FOR
THE
NETHERLANDS

UNITED NATIONS
SECRETARIAT 24 July 1987

TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY EMPLOYED
IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

THE UNITED NATIONS AND GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES



Since 1959 the United Nations has served world communications by promoting the standardization of geographical names.

Six UN international conferences and 17 meetings of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names have been dedicated to principles, policies, and procedures nations could follow to help assure communications contain accurate and current references to places. This brochure describes UN efforts to standardize geographical names.

For further information about UN names programs, write to the Secretary,
UNGEKN, NREDVDTCT, New York
USA 10007

*Attachment to Report of
Working Group on Publicity and Funding*

THE BEGINNING

For many years, geographers and cartographers recognized that variations in the spelling of geographical names hindered accurate communications within and among nations. In 1959, a group of experts from several nations discussed the topic with UN officials. The UN then formed a committee to create principles of standardizing names.

Following recommendations of the committee, the UN agreed to hold a conference in 1967. The UN also created another body--the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEKN)--to meet between conferences and implement resolutions. They are geographers, cartographers, linguists, historians and others interested in names. They represent 19 geographic-linguistic divisions.

3.

WHY STANDARDIZE NAMES?

As communications about our world increase, the possibility for confusion about names increases. Publishers of maps and atlases need to spell names of features in other countries. As they deal with other languages--particularly those with a different writing system--they spell names so their national users understand them. They apply conversion systems which may vary from country to country. The result in such national atlases can be, for example, the name of a river in Siberia can be Jenisei, Jenissei, or Yenysey. Cities in Russia will also have different spellings.

Similarly, the impact on journalists can be significant. Correspondents from different news agencies may use different conversion systems in referring to places. The editors and readers may have difficulty understanding that news about Basra refers to the same city as

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news about Al Bassaorah. Similarly, there will be confusion about news from Vienna, Wien, Wenen, and Becs; and from Capetown, Kapstad, and Le Cap.

UN POLICIES

What is the UN doing to prevent the confusion of different spellings of names--or of different names for single features? It has developed an elaborate program supported by many countries of the world. The program has the following points:

- * Stimulate the establishment of a names authority in each country
- * Provide training courses to nations wanting to create authorities
- * Encourage publication of national gazetteers (alphabetical lists of names with coordinates and other information)

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- * Collaborate with other countries on standardized names of common features
- * Work toward national methods for automated data processing of names
- * Promote the development of romanization systems to meet broad requirements

RESULTS OF UN PROGRAMS

UN names work has produced good results. Many nations have undertaken standardization programs. While the degree of the programs varies, it is obvious much progress has been made since the first conference.

The conferences recommend closer ties with organizations also involved with geographic names. Cartographic agencies, for example, rely on accurate names information, and understand how UN programs can benefit their tasks. A new publicity program will further advertise to a broader public the importance of standardizing geographical names.