

**Twenty-ninth session
Bangkok, 25 – 29 April 2016**

Item 16 of the provisional agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Report of the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage^{}**

Submitted by the WG on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage^{*}

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Summary

The aim for the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage is to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names, as well as to stress the scope of names as cultural heritage. Among the most important topics for the WG are geographical names used by minorities, legislation and policies regarding geographical names as cultural heritage and the promotion of fieldwork and the registration of names. The WG intends to make guidelines available on its website as well as present examples of good naming practices. The convenors of the WG invite experts to contribute good examples.

The WG suggests a discussion with the Working Group for Evaluation and Implementation on the possibilities of a change of wording in the statutes of the UNGEGN, so that the notion *place names as cultural heritage* would be mentioned, in order to stress the importance of collecting and recording names not only for cartographic purposes but also for cultural purposes.

The Working Group

The Working Group was established to address Resolution 1 of the Eight Conference (Berlin, 2002) as Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Place Names, with the aim to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as means of cultural retention/revitalization. The name of the WG was changed at a side meeting at the 27th Session in New York 2012.

Working Group meetings since 2014

A Working Group meeting was held at the 28th UNGEGN session in New York on April 28, 2014. The convenorship was transferred from Mr. Bill Watt to Ms. Annette Torensjö and Mr. Leif Nilsson. A steering group was appointed, comprised of the members Mr. Peder Gammeltoft, Mr. Sungjae Choo, Mr. Teemu Leskinen, Ms. Naima Friha, Mr. Michel Simeu Kamdem and Ms. Eman Orieby.

Another Working Group meeting was held in Copenhagen in Denmark on September 9–10, 2015, in connection with a joint meeting with the Working Group for Evaluation and Implementation and the Working Group for Publicity and Funding and the Norden Division. At the same occasion, on September 10, a workshop was organized, dealing with the organization of the work in the WG, with methodology, and with the WG's main issues and activities.

The Topics for the WG

- Geographical names used by minorities
- Geographical names as cultural heritage
- Legislation and policies
- Fieldwork and the registration of names
 - Presentation of good practices, e.g., the Guide to the field collection of native geographical names (Provisional Edition), 1992, by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names
 - http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/rncan-nrcan/M86-29-1992-eng.pdf
 - The inclusion of urban names
 - The importance of a common feature classification
- Research on geographical names as cultural heritage
- Commemorative names
- The commercialization of geographical names

Work plan

The aim of the Working Group was discussed during the workshop at the Copenhagen meeting, resulting in the following work plan, in order to extend the original intent of the WG, and in order to stress the importance of names as cultural heritage.

The Working Group decided to set up focus groups in order to be able to allocate tasks to the different experts within the WG.

The WG will build up a website, on which documents prepared by the WG will be published, and where examples of good naming practices will be put forward. The website will also make guidelines available (e.g., regarding commemorative naming). The convenors of the WG invite experts to contribute good examples.

During the Copenhagen meeting the WG discussed the possibilities of a change of statutes of the UNGEGN so that the notion place names as cultural heritage would be explicitly mentioned in the statutes. One of the experts reminded the WG of the tentative proposals made in 2005 at the Norden Division meeting. The expert pointed out that the suggested changes would stress the importance of collecting and recording names not only for cartographic purposes but also for cultural purposes. When authorities show an interest in particular names, and the background of the names is provided by local inhabitants, and when the names are recorded in a linguistically correct manner, then the users of the names are shown respect and are thus themselves encouraged to preserve the names in question.

The present experts found the suggestion important, and the co-convenors were commissioned to conduct a discussion with the Working Group for Evaluation and Implementation on necessary considerations regarding the suggested change of wording of the statutes.

Further activities of the Working Group since 2014

The co-convenor Annette Torensjö participated in the International Symposium on *Toponymy, Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage* on November 5–7, 2014 in Seoul, South Korea, presenting the paper *Good place-name practice in Sweden: Legislation and how to act as a Place-name authority*.

The co-convenors Leif Nilsson and Annette Torensjö participated in the Meeting of the Romano-Hellenic Division in Firenze, Italy on March 25–27, 2015 and in the International scientific symposium on *Place names as intangible cultural heritage* in Firenze, Italy on March 26–27, 2015 presenting the paper *Place-names as intangible cultural heritage – the example of Sweden*.