

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**27 July 2012**

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

New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress  
made in the standardization of geographical names since the Ninth Conference  
(for distribution only).**

**South Africa Country Report**

Submitted by South Africa\*\*

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## **SOUTH AFRICA: COUNTRY REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to the South African Geographical Names Act of 1998 (Act No. 118 of 1998) amongst the objectives of the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) is to facilitate the establishment of Provincial Geographical Names Committees, to facilitate the transformation process for geographical names and to promote awareness of the economic and social benefits of the standardization

### **BACKGROUND**

On the 29 November 2002 the Department approved that Provinces should be given financial assistance (R200 000.00 for each Province) to facilitate establishment and formation of PGNCs in all provinces to deal with transformation of geographical names.

Since the disbursement of these funds – that were designed to empower the Provincial departments (through the Provincial Geographical Names Committees) to expedite the cleaning of the database and standardization of geographical, less progress has been reported.

### **MABITSO CAMPAIGN**

The Department of Arts and Culture took upon itself to drive capacity building and an aggressive awareness campaign in all provinces in order to address the issue of transformation of geographical names

A conclusion was reached after the capacity building and awareness campaign that all provinces have adopted different models aimed at ensuring the realization of their mandate(ensuring standardization of geographical names) as outlined by the South African Geographical Names Council Act of 1998. These models were influenced what each province identify as a priority. But all provinces came to a conclusion that financial capacity, organizational capacity, human resource, political buy-in and support at a provincial level were key factors.

### **CABINET INSTRUCTION**

The FOSAD HEAD/CABINET SECRETARY reported to the Department on the outcome of the meeting with the President and the Deputy President held on 18 April 2007. During this meeting the Department, among other things, was tasked with implementing special social cohesion campaigns, which include national symbols and country-wide public hearings on geographical names. The recommendation is that the South African Geographical Names Council undertakes country-wide public hearings on place names of districts/metros/local municipalities and completes this work in 18 months.

The Minister responded to the above FOSAD instruction by finalizing the establishment of the New South African Geographical Names Council. The Minister appointed the New South African Geographical Names Council in November 2007. Since 2008 the National Treasury made funds available to address concerns raised by the Cabinet.

## **PROVINCIAL HEARINGS**

On 30 May 2008 in Cape Town the Department of Arts and Culture and the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) launched the special social cohesion campaigns focusing on geographical names, where a plan to conduct national hearings on geographical names in all nine provinces was presented to the public and the media.

Since then the campaigns have been held in Mpumalanga Province (16 -17 October 2008), Eastern Cape Province (30 - 31 October 2008), Free State Province (13 - February 2009), North West Province (26 – 27 March 2009), KwaZulu Natal (31 March 2009), Limpopo Province (11 February 2010), Western Cape (04 March 2010), Gauteng (24 March 2010) and Northern Cape Province on 03 June 2010.

A National Workshop to conclude provincial hearings was held on 09-10 June 2011 at Indaba Hotel, Fourways in Johannesburg. In line with the theme “Forging a common South Africa identity and nationhood through naming” the workshop was attended by more than 300 people from across the broad social spectrum of the country.

Promotion of Administrative Justice Act of 2000 (PAJA) clarifies the public participation and consultation process which is central in standardisation of geographical names. Cross Border features can be standardized correctly only if Africa South Division (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Malawi and Zambia) is active and participating in all United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) activities. These two issues were amongst some of the challenges that were dominating Provincial Hearings and National Workshop on Geographical Names.

Since the establishment of the SAGNC through the South African Geographical Names Council Act of 1998, the Department has been called to defend the Minister’s decision in Courts on some of the name changes. The issue of public participation and consultation is central with all these cases. Hence it is important that PAJA is unpacked during the Summit for our stakeholders (local authorities, provinces, developers) to understand it better.

The UNGEGN has been consistent in asking for South African to assist in reviving the Africa South Division of the UNGEGN. On 23 -25 November Botswana hosted a meeting to discuss the challenges of lack of cartographic products in Africa and its impact on lack of economic development. It will be proper for South Africa to host a follow up meeting that will finalising resolutions to be presented by African countries in New York in July 2012 during the UNGEGN 27<sup>th</sup> Session.

## **NATIONAL WORKSHOP**

Day one of the Workshop was opened by the Minister or the Director General to set the tone and give guidance (see attached draft programme). After tea break representatives from the legal fraternity addressed the Workshop on PAJA. Representatives of the UNGEGN, Organization of African Unity and Economic Commission for Africa made comments to the Workshop on possible intervention that can be made by their respective organization to revive participation by African countries in the activities of UNGEGN. African countries present were also given

opportunity to talk about status quo on standardisation of geographical names in their respective countries.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The National Workshop was attended by representatives of all municipalities who are central in initiating and processing name change proposals, Current and past members of the South African Geographical Names Council, Provincial geographical names committee members, Africa South Division member countries, representatives of UNGEGN Task Team for Africa and interested stakeholders. The event is attracted about 500 participants.