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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 Ninth Conference

Africa East Division Report

Submitted by the Africa East Division**

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** Prepared by Nivo Ratovoarison (Madagascar), Chair, Africa East Division

AFRICA EAST DIVISION REPORT

SUMMARY

The Africa East Division couldn't organize its own meetings but its members could take advantage of opportunities offered by attending other workshops to discuss and to implement the action plan. This report relates the activities that have been done during those meetings.

INTRODUCTION

According to the UNGEGN list, the Africa East Division is composed of 16 countries: Botswana, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Let us remark the following facts:

- Some countries are not integrated in that list: Comoros, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda ...
- Some are included but have never attended UNGEGN Session: Seychelles-Malawi-Mauritius-Swaziland (*cf. Report of the UNGEGN Chairperson 25th Session, Nairobi*)
- Eight countries belong as well to Africa South Division (Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and one to Africa North Division (Sudan)
- New representatives who are not aware of previous decisions are hardly convinced that his/her country can belongs to more than one division

Apart from this, the Africa East Division couldn't organize its own meetings but its members took advantage of opportunities offered by other workshops to discuss and to implement its action plan.

NAIROBI 2009

The 25th UNGEGN Session has been held in Nairobi with a view over the participation of more African countries but it was not exactly what happened. Among the 16 countries included in the UNGEGN list for Africa East division, only 3 countries were represented and yet, one of them is the host country.

With the support of UNGEGN Chair, the six delegates from those countries (Kenya, Ethiopia and Madagascar) decided to hold a meeting during the Session in order to think about what should be done to boost Africa East Division.

Noticing that the division didn't submit a report for there was not even a bureau, the first action of the group was to make an election of a new bureau and the result is as follows:

Chair : Nivo Ratovoarison (Madagascar)
Secretariat : Charles Mwangi (Kenya)

Rapporteur : Solomon Kebede Mammo (Ethiopia)

Then, the group drew up an action plan mainly focused on the revitalization of the division:

- contact all countries members who were not represented during UNGEGN Session through:
 - o potential contacts from existing database of
 - members institutes
 - UNGEGN
 - Regional centers
 - o all East Africa delegates who attended UNGEGN training courses
- send an explanatory message on the need for standardization of geographical names, the role of each country and the general situation in Africa, particularly in the East Division
- ask for a focal point to develop information exchange

The immediate action undertaken was to contact the Regional Center for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) and the African Organization of Cartography and Remote Sensing (AO CRS) and to ask them to provide their own list of focal points to the division. The UNGEGN Chair has also been very helpful for this task.

The UNGEGN Chair expressed her appreciation for the initiative undertaken by the members and gave them encouragement to continue their efforts.

VIENNA 2011

Just as in Kenya, the representation of Africa during the 26th UNGEGN Session in Vienna was very low. The UNGEGN Chair pointed out to Africa East and Africa Central divisions' chairs that their problem is almost the same and she encouraged them to join effort to solve it. Thus, an informal meeting was organized by delegates from Botswana, Cameroon, Madagascar, Sudan, and Democratic Republic of Congo to discuss about what could be done.

Note that it was quite difficult to convince the representative from Sudan to join the group because she was unaware that her country is also member of Africa East Division.

After consultation, the six representatives have agreed on the following points:

- To work in team, to strengthen collaboration between the participants and to not break the connections.
- To closely monitor UNECA commitment to provide assistance to the African group
- The teleconference as a solution to the problem of funding a meeting. It is convenient as it ensures rapid exchange of ideas and allows everyone to participate in a discussion group.

GABORONE 2011

The UNECA has fulfilled the promise made during the UNGEGN session in Vienna in organizing the "consultative workshop on future orientation of geographical names activities in Africa", in Gaborone. The Gaborone Action Plan (GAP) is the outcome of discussions and its implementation would allow African divisions to achieve their goals, the most urgent is to get the involvement of all African countries to the standardization of geographical names.

At the end of the workshop, an informal meeting was held by Africa East Division comprising delegates from Kenya and Madagascar. It was also attended by the RCMRD representative and the UNGEGN Chair.

The Chair of the Division reported that she made several attempts to get contact with Africa East countries to implement the action plan developed in Nairobi in 2009 but no reaction was noted. So she requested again the UNGEGN and the RCMRD assistance.

After discussions, the RCMRD representative has given his commitment to be a mediator between the Division and the Mapping Services delegates from Africa East countries. He suggested also that a training course on the Geonyms Application might be helpful, being a means to attract other countries to join UNGEGN and the Division.

The UNGEGN Chair confirmed her willingness to assist and therefore, she got some contacts during the high level forum on Global Geospatial Management Information (GGIM) which was held in Seoul in October 2011. Among them, the representative of Zimbabwe participated actively in giving his country report for the consultative workshop.

JOHANNESBURG 2012

Thanks to the UNGEGN Expert from South Africa and the Department of Arts and Culture, a workshop on Geographical Names was held in Johannesburg in April 2012.

- It was an opportunity for the Task Team for Africa to monitor the implementation of the GAP.
- It allowed also another meeting for the Africa East Division: the bureau (Chair and Secretary) could think about the report outline for the conference and discuss about the long-lasting problem of getting. On this point, Kenya proposed an alternative through the Kenya Institute of Surveying and Mapping (KISM, *cf. Kenya report*).
- Mozambique and Swaziland sent representatives who wanted to know about what have been done. The Africa East Division Chair engaged to send them pertinent information and explanation about the activities on geographical names within the UNGEGN and Task Team for Africa.
- It was an occasion for the Botswana and Madagascar representatives to test the Africa geonyms with their own data. The process allowed the Expert from ECA to find the bugs and to improve the tool.

CONCLUSION

Since the UNGEGN Session in Nairobi, the members of the Task Team for Africa got opportunities to meet more frequently and the team definitely strengthened after the GAP.

Since then, the Division is struggling with the research for contact in Africa East countries and the result is rather disappointing.

Fortunately, the UNGEGN Chair, Helen Kerfoot, offered to the Division her continuous and precious assistance in many ways: pertinent advices, encouragement, seeking herself contacts when there is an opportunity. Therefore, in addition to Zimbabwe who sent as we told a country report for the consultative workshop, Mozambique, Swaziland and Malawi have also joined the team during the

workshop in South Africa. Let us hope that the situation will continue to progress and that promoting the geographical names standardization in Africa will not be a utopia.

Prepared by Nivo Ratovoarison (Madagascar), Chair, Africa East Division

COMMUNICATION OF KENYA

The GAP can be implemented through constant interactions and knowledge sharing.
For instance,

1. The Standing Committee on Geographical Names (SCGN) is established through an Act of Parliament, administered by Ministry of Lands and functions as per the specifications spelt out in the Survey Manual.
2. Standardization of GNs is complete (Romanization of the GNs for the 42 dialects are harmonized in Swahili)
3. The department of Surveys has offices distributed in all the district in Kenya and are answerable to the Director of Surveys at the Headquarters.
4. These offices liaise with all other stake holders and collect authentic geospatial information GNs included.
5. Kenya is in the process of preparing a third edition of the National Geographical Names Gazetteer digitally.
6. Cartography and Geomatics students have in their syllabi a topic on standardization of GN that requires modification and revision as per technological advances.
7. Kenya Institute of Surveying and Mapping (KISM) the training wing of Survey Department conducts Surveying, Mapping, Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing courses to participants from countries in the Africa East and Africa South Divisions of UNGEGN annually in the third country training program, a possible outreach to the neighboring countries.

These are some areas that can be furthered as we endeavor to finalize the GAP. The Director meets with other directors during the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) on regional policy issues.

By Charles Mwangi (Kenya), Secretary, Africa East Division