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**11<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 8 -17 August 2017

Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports on the work of the United Nations Group of Experts  
on Geographical Names, its divisions, working groups and  
task teams since the Tenth Conference**

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

Submitted by the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage \*\*

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\* E/CONF.105/1

\*\* Prepared by Ms Annette Torensjö, Convenor, Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

\*\*\* Reissue due to technical reasons

## **Report of the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage**

Submitted by the WG on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

### **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 convenor of the WG invite experts to contribute good examples.

### **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 27<sup>th</sup> Session in New York 2012.

### **Organization**

Convenor until 2014: Mr Bill Watt

Convenor since 2014: Ms Annette Torensjö

Co-convenor with Ms Torensjö until April 2016: Mr Leif Nilsson

Rapporteur: Ms Leila Mattfolk

Steering group 2014–2016: Mr. Peder Gammeltoft, Mr. Sungjae Choo, Mr. Teemu Leskinen, Ms. Naima Friha, Mr. Michel Simeu Kamdem, Ms. Eman Orieby. The steering group was repealed by the meeting in Bangkok in April 2016.

### **Organization of work**

The work within the WG is organized through meetings in connection with the sessions and on other occasions, preferably as joint meetings with other working groups or divisions or groups of interest.

Because of the wide range of aspects, the work within the working group is best organized through different focus groups.

### **Working Group activities since 2012**

1. WG meeting at the 28<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN session in New York on April 28, 2014.

2. WG meeting 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.
3. A workshop in Copenhagen on September 10, 2015. The workshop dealt with the organization of work in the WG, with methodology, and with the WG's main issues and activities.
4. WG meeting at the 29<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN session in Bangkok on April 29, 2016.
5. WG meeting/workshop in Innsbruck on April 19-22, 2016 in connection with a joint meeting with the Working Group for Evaluation and Implementation and the Working Group for Publicity and Funding.

### **The WG Topics**

- Geographical names used by minorities/Indigenous names
- 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](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

The topics are country specific, i.e. participating members of the working group should prioritize topics that suite the needs of their country, while the starting point are very different.

### **Work plan**

The Working Group will 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 convenor of the WG invite experts to contribute good examples.

Bill Watt will update the maps made during the initial years of the working group, as long as he is provided data. It would be important to get name used in endangered languages notes on the maps.

### **Further activities of relevance for the Working Group since 2012**

The International Symposium on *Toponymy, Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage*, November 5–7, 2014 in Seoul, South Korea, organized by National Geographic Information Institute, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation, Republic of Korea. (The co-convenor Annette Torensjö participated, presenting the paper *Good place-name practice in Sweden: Legislation and how to act as a Place-name authority.*)

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

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.

The Working Group made a proposal to change the statutes of the UNGEGN through working paper No. 55/20 at UNGEGN's Twenty-ninth session in Bangkok, April 25–29 2016. The proposal stressed the need to include the notion *geographical names as cultural heritage* in the statute, while this notion permeates many of the UNGEGN activities today. The proposed changes were discussed, and the following wordings were decided on by the Group of Experts:

1. Under “I. Aims”, after subparagraph (c), insert a new subparagraph, reading: “(d) To emphasize, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respecting the equality among languages, the significance of geographical names as a part of the historical and cultural heritage and identity of nations.”, and renumber the subsequent subparagraphs;
2. Under “II. Principles”, after paragraph 4 (b), insert a new subparagraph, reading: “(c) The standardization of geographical names must pay attention to the inherited geographical names and their significance in the preservation of local, regional and national heritage and identity.”;
3. Under, “III. Functions”, after paragraph 7, insert a new paragraph, reading: “8. To increase the awareness of and respect for different languages, nations and cultures in an equal manner by promoting the use of geographical names that have been standardized on a national basis and that therefore respect local, regional and national heritage and identity;”, and renumber the subsequent paragraphs.

### **Relevant publications**

*Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage. International Symposium on Toponymy. Wednesday, November 5 to Friday, November 7, 2014.* National Geographic Information Institute, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation, Republic of Korea. (Proceedings with 11 printed papers on the topic Geographical names as Cultural heritage.)

Mattfolk, Leila, 2015: Working group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage, in UNGEGN Information Bulletin, no. 49, November 2015 (From the Working Groups), p. 19–21:  
[https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Bulletin/FINAL\\_ungegn%20bulletin%2049\\_revised.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Bulletin/FINAL_ungegn%20bulletin%2049_revised.pdf)

The 48<sup>th</sup> issue of the UNGEGN bulletin, with a special features section on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage:

[https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Bulletin/UNGEGN%20Bulletin%2048\\_FINAL.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Bulletin/UNGEGN%20Bulletin%2048_FINAL.pdf)

Torensjö, Annette and Leif Nilsson, 2015: Working group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage, in UNGEGN Information Bulletin, no. 48, May 2015, (From the Working Groups) p. 30:

[https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Bulletin/UNGEGN%20Bulletin%2048\\_FINAL.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Bulletin/UNGEGN%20Bulletin%2048_FINAL.pdf)