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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 Toponymic Terminology**

Submitted by the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology \*\*

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\*\* Prepared by Staffan Nyström (Sweden), Convenor of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

## Background and Working Group Meetings until 2013

The Working Group on Toponymic Terminology was set up by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its 14<sup>th</sup> session in Geneva in May 1989. The main tasks of the group were to produce a new glossary of toponymic terminology, and to periodically review and update the glossary. A first glossary had been completed in 1984, with revisions in 1986 and 1987. One of the tasks was achieved in 2002 when the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names (edited by Naftali Kadmon, Israel), including 375 terms and their definitions in the six official UN languages, was published in one combined volume with appropriate cross-referencing.

In resolution VIII/3 (2002) the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) recognized that “terminology is not at a standstill, and that future developments will require additions and/or amendments to the definitions of terms”, and recommended that the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology continue to function. At the ninth UNCSGN in New York (2007) an Addendum with a total of 23 entries were ratified and approved for insertion in the Glossary. 12 of these were terms in the Glossary whose definitions had been amended, and the other 11 were additional terms not included in the 2002 Glossary.

Both the Glossary and the Addendum can now be found in pdf-format on the UNGEGN website.

Working group meetings have – since the ninth UNCSGN 2007 – taken place in Vienna (May 2008), Toronto (August 2008), Vienna (December 2009; together with the ICOS terminology group), Uppsala (October 2010), Vienna (May 2011) and Corfu (May 2013). For more details on these meetings see WP 17 from the 27<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN session in New York 2012, and below.

### The WG meeting in Corfu 2013

The meeting was organized as a joint meeting of the two Working Groups on Exonyms (two days) and Toponymic Terminology (a half day). This cooperation comes quite natural since one of the major objectives of the exonym group is to clarify and define the concepts and the basic terms *endonym* and *exonym*, terms that are already included in the Glossary, and thus a responsibility also for the terminology group. More than 30 experts were present at both the group meetings.

The convenor of the terminology group presented some comparisons and differences between the UNGEGN Glossary and the list of key onomastic terms produced by ICOS (the International Council of Onomastic Sciences – cf. <http://www.gencat.cat/lengua/BTPL/ICOS2011/008.pdf> – for instance concerning the terms *hodonym/odonym*, *hydronym* and *oronym*. The differences were discussed but with one exception – *onomastics* – this did not result in any decided amendments in the Glossary. The ICOS list of terms defines *onomastics* as “the study of proper names in a scholarly way” while the UNGEGN Glossary gives two different definitions: a) “The science that has as its object the study of names” and b) “The activity or process of giving names”. Definition b) was now considered obsolete by the working group and will not be included in the digital database.

The group also discussed some terms that are not yet included in the Glossary. One of these terms is English *settlement name* defined as “proper name of all kinds of human habitations (cities, towns, villages, hamlets, farms, ranches, houses, etc.) – e.g. *Paris, Turku, Yokohama, †Troia, Villa Bellona* (a house)”. This term and definition will be included in the digital database.

The group also paid some attention to the terms *dual names*, *dual naming*, *multiple names* and *multiple naming*, already widely used in some parts of the world but not yet included in the Glossary. Definitions were suggested by prof. Isolde Hausner (Austria) but they have not yet been seriously discussed by the Working Group.

### The terminology database

In accordance with resolution VIII/3 the working group has continued to discuss a number of already approved and published terms, as well as terms still lacking in the Glossary, but without proposing that any further amendments and additions be made available in printed form. Instead the working group (through Peder Gammeltoft and his colleagues in Copenhagen, Denmark) have started to develop a database on toponymic terminology, based on the printed UNGEGN Glossary (2002) and its Addendum (2007). A preliminary version of the database was presented in New York in 2012, five years ago, but even so it is not yet completely ready to launch. The present convenor of the Working Group does not see himself as the right person to be responsible for such a digitization project.

### **Working Group Meetings and Working Papers 2014–2016**

Several members of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology, including the convenor, have taken active part in meetings of the Working Group on Exonyms. The terminology Working Group has had no meetings of its own during the period. However, a number of Working Papers have been presented and briefly discussed at the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN sessions in New York 2014 and Bangkok 2016 respectively:

- Detailed Terminographic Analysis of “Glossary of Terminology Used in the Standardization of Geographical Names” (2014, Poland),
- Proposed definition of new terms for the glossary (2016, Task Team for Africa),
- Undersea Feature Terminology (2016, USA),
- When exonyms and endonyms turn into *international names*: an additional function of the term (2016, Austria),
- “Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names”. The Polish edition (2016, Poland),
- The New Hungarian translation of Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names (2016, Hungary).

These Working Papers will have to be taken into consideration again when a digitized version of the Glossary is finally created.

### **Change of Convenors**

As announced already in Bangkok 2016 there will be a change of convenors of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology during the Eleventh Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The Working Group has been rather inactive during the last few years, not because there is a lack of tasks and challenges but because of me having very little time to put on this assignment. The Working Group needs a new Convenor.