UNGEGN, objectives, current structure and programme of work

Agenda Item 4 CRP 160

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Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
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Geographical names affect many areas of life, including:

- Business & trade
- National statistics & census
- Property rights & cadastre
- Urban & regional planning
- Environment - sustainable development/conservation
- Aid delivery & national disaster relief
- Security & peacekeeping
- Search & rescue operations
- Map & atlas production
- Navigation
- Tourism
- Communications (including postal & media services)

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
Need for standardization

- Important advances - technology and communication
  - potentially a growing audience
  - sending and receiving data → easier

- This progress increases expectations
  - data must be reliable – accurate and up to date
  - not always easy to meet expectations

- Toponyms are indispensable components of all spatially-referenced information systems
  ... Google Earth, etc.
• UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) – since 1967
  • 10 Conferences, every five years
  • promotes national standardization as international standardization
    • starting with resolution I/4

• UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names
  • follows up Conference resolutions
  • assures continuity of work
    • networking; best practices; projects

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names

• one of 20 expert groups of ECOSOC
• follows up on implementation of resolutions
• provides continuity between conferences
• convenes between conferences (2 yrs) - 29 sessions
• supported by a Secretariat at UNHQ (New York)
• creates working groups to follow up on resolutions
• has 24 geographical/linguistic divisions for grass roots work
UN Conference/UNEGGN aims

• Encourage the creation of national names authorities – backed by legislation
  • respect local usage of names
  • collect, store and disseminate authorized names
    • for government and public use

• Develop scientifically-based systems of romanization

• Today - encourage multi-national datasets

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
Technical

• Develop procedures and establish mechanisms for standardization
• Discuss practical and theoretical steps towards standardization
• Develop appropriate programmes to achieve standardization
Coordination

• Prepare for UNCSGNs; provide continuity between Conferences and guide implementation of Resolutions
• Create necessary structures to supplement the work of divisions
• Coordinate the activities of linguistic/geographical divisions
Promotion

• Make mapping organizations aware of the importance of using standardized geographical names
• Liaise with international organizations dealing with related subjects
• Make standardization principles and standardized geographical names widely available
UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN)

UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

Country Names
Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers
Publicity and Funding
Toponymic Terminology
Romanization Systems
Training Courses in Toponymy
Evaluation & Implementation
Exonyms
Pronunciation
Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

UNGEGN Secretariat (UN Statistics Division)

UNGEGN Bureau

Divisions
24 linguistic/geographical divisions

Task Team for Africa
Toponymic Guidelines Coordinator

UNGEGN liaison with scientific groups

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Training

Romanization

Data files / gazetteers

Evaluation / implementation

Terminology

Pronunciation

Cultural heritage

Exonyms

Publicity / funding

Country names

Task Team for Africa

Coordination of Toponymic Guidelines

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
WG - Toponymic data files and gazetteers

- Major task to promote consistency of data
  - development and maintenance of digital toponymic files and data bases
  - gazetteers (hard copy and digital)
  - data exchange formats and standards
  - liaison with ISO TC211 and Unicode consortium
  - need to be a focal point for info on software
  - processes for VGI and crowd-sourced data
  - definitions of general feature types/categories
  - updates for technical manual

Website: https://wiki.gdi-de.org/display/wgtdfg/


- Romanization systems

- Languages/scripts covered by systems recommended by the United Nations (30):
  - Amharic [pdf/html]
  - Arabic [pdf/html]
  - Assamese [pdf/html]
  - Belarussian [pdf/html]
  - Bengali [pdf/html]
  - Bulgarian [pdf/html]
  - Chinese [pdf/html]
  - Greek [pdf/html]
  - Gujarati [pdf/html]
  - Hebrew [pdf/html]
  - Hindi [pdf/html]
  - Kannada [pdf/html]
  - Khmer [pdf/html]
  - Macedonian Cyrillic [pdf/html]
  - Malayalam [pdf/html]
  - Marathi [pdf/html]
  - Mongolian (in China) [pdf/html]
  - Nepali [pdf/html]
  - Oriya [pdf/html]
  - Persian [pdf/html]
  - Punjabi [pdf/html]
  - Russian [pdf/html]
  - Serbian [pdf/html]
  - Tamil [pdf/html]
  - Telugu [pdf/html]
  - Thai [pdf/html]
  - Tibetan [pdf/html]
  - Uighur [pdf/html]
  - Ukrainian [pdf/html]
  - Urdu [pdf/html]

- Other languages/scripts (15):
  - Armenian [pdf/html]
  - Burmese [pdf/html]
  - Dzongkha [pdf/html]
  - Georgian [pdf/html]
  - Japanese [pdf/html]
  - Kazakh [pdf/html]
  - Kirghiz [pdf/html]
  - Korean [pdf/html]
  - Lao [pdf/html]
  - Maldivian [pdf/html]
  - Mongolian (Cyrillic) [pdf/html]
  - Pashto [pdf/html]
  - Sinhalese [pdf/html]
  - Tajik [pdf/html]
  - Tigrinya [pdf/html]

For a more complete listing see a special subpage.
WG - Training courses in Toponymy

• Courses offered to international audiences since 1982 - in various languages and locations
• Collection of course outlines, etc. available
• To reach a larger audience ... moving towards web-based courses
  • unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNEGGN/docs/_data_
  ICAcourses/index.html (developed with ICA)
    - also in French (Div. Francophone) and in Spanish (PAIGH)
• New advanced manual online
Offering training courses and developing web-based training

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
WG - Toponymic terminology

• Need for commonly recognized terminology for any discipline
• First Glossary was published by the UN in 1984
• Updated and expanded Glossary in 2002 ... six languages of UN; 375 terms
• Into maintenance phase - first additions and changes on UNGEGN website, 2007
• Establishing database of terminology
WG – Geographical names as cultural heritage

• Aim to promote the work being done on cultural heritage, including indigenous, or minority and regional group names

• Retention / revitalization of cultures through toponyms

• Res. VIII/1 (2002), Res. IX/5 (2007)

• Compile guidelines; gather legislation and principles for recording and use of names in cultural context; dialogue with other groups
UNGE GN Divisions

- Africa Central
- Africa East
- Africa South
- Africa West
- Arabic
- Asia East (other than China)
- Asia South-East
- Asia South-West (other than Arabic)
- Baltic
- Celtic
- China
- Dutch- and German-speaking
- East Central and South-East Europe
- Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia
- East Mediterranean (other than Arabic)
- French-speaking
- India
- Latin America
- Pacific South-West
- Norden
- Portuguese-speaking
- Romano-Hellenic
- United Kingdom
- United States / Canada

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
UNGEGN World Geonames Database

• Access through UNGEGN web site

• To include names (geo-referenced) of:
  • Countries and capitals
    • 6 UN languages
    • Language(s) of country
  • Cities > 100,000

• Original writing system + romanization

• Audio for endonyms

• In future to add: Variant names – exonyms, historical ...

Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names
UNGEGN and UN-GGIM: Common principles

- UNGEGN and UN-GGIM recognize that geographical names are an essential part of geospatial information management and its fundamental data themes.
- UNGEGN recognizes that UN-GGIM has the mandate to provide a strategic assessment of geospatial information needs and will support UN-GGIM recommendations to meet mutual goals.
- UNGEGN accepts strategic directions related to geospatial information management that flow from UN-GGIM, and UNGEGN will internalize and promote these directions as they apply to geographical names, encouraging countries and agencies within countries, as required, to meet the strategic initiatives.
- UN-GGIM will support UNGEGN in communicating and promoting the essential role of geographical names in the overall geospatial information environment and the benefits of countries establishing a process for geographical names standardization management in line with UNGEGN guidelines and recommendations.
- UNGEGN and UN-GGIM will continue to operate and function as distinct bodies. A dedicated UNGEGN is indispensable alongside a well-functioning UN-GGIM.
- UNGEGN and UN-GGIM will communicate and collaborate with each other on a regular and ongoing basis.
Promoting the collection, standardization and dissemination of geographical names