

**Group of Experts on  
Geographical names**

**Twelfth Session  
Geneva, 29 September - 7 October 1986**

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Agenda Item 5

Working Group on Definitions

Report by the Liaison Officer

## WORKING GROUP ON DEFINITIONS

### Report by the Convenor

A list of additional terms has been submitted by M Ramondou, the Expert from France. The list invokes the question as to which terms should be included. Is it necessary to include "parallel" and "meridian" or can one assume these to be ordinary words like "terminology" or "expert" which do not require specific definition? If "parallel" and "meridian" are included ought not "latitude" and "longitude" to be also defined? Similarly if the term "rectangular coordinates" is defined why not "grid", "graticule" and "mesh", terms which are frequently misapplied by geographers and others who appear to be unaware of their special cartographic significance.

The word "cacography" means literally "bad writing". Bad hand-writing or bad spelling are both covered but is such a term necessary? Will "corrupted name" serve the same purpose?

There is a tendency in some quarters to devise terms for categories of feature. "Odonym" is such a term. It is already in use. The question is whether other terms derived from Greek or Latin should be employed or should their use be discouraged. Terms like "Urbonym" do not specifically cover all categories covered by the term "populated place", abbreviated POPL for coded designation in gazetteers. Should the use of populated place" be encouraged and the use of "urbonym" "polisonym" (!) be discouraged?

Do we need to include terms like "agglutination"; "consonant"; "semi-vowel"; "tone"; "hiatus"? "diacritical"?

If "consonant" is defined should the categories of "consonant" be defined?

In considering the type of question raised above, Experts are asked to bear in mind the multilingual nature of the Glossary of Terms. Terms conceived in a European environment need to be part of the Arabic and Chinese language glossaries. Plain language is in this respect more useful than specially coined terms of scientific appearance. It is suggested that specially devised terms should never be adopted for use if the language of everyday speech and writing can provide an alternative.