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**Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

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Agenda item 5

**DUTCH AND GERMAN-SPEAKING DIVISION**

**Report for South Africa**

**Submitted by Peter E. Raper (South Africa)**

**UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

**DUTCH AND GERMAN-SPEAKING DIVISION**

**REPORT FOR SOUTH AFRICA**

Presented by Peter E. Raper (South Africa)

**1. PUBLICATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN THEIR STANDARDIZED FORM**

- (a) The national names authority of South Africa, the National Place Names Committee (NPNC), was established in 1939 and in the fifty years of its existence has standardized many thousands of geographical names.
- (b) In the course of time its guidelines were adapted to changing circumstances, such as the diminishing need to treat Dutch names. Furthermore, the orthographic rules applicable to several of the African languages were altered and amended, or variously interpreted, from time to time, resulting in different forms of the same type of name, and even of the same name, having been approved at different times, such as uMvoti, Umvoti, UMvoti and Mvoti.
- (c) As a result, it has been decided to revise the list of geographical names approved between 1939 and 1978 and published under the title Official Place Names in the Republic of South Africa and in South West Africa, as well as those names approved subsequently.
- (d) The Onomastic Research Centre of the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria has been requested to undertake this work for the NPNC.

**2. NATIONAL GAZETTEER**

- (a) Pending the outcome of the revision of hitherto standardized geographical names, it has been considered advisable to suspend work on the Gazetteer for South Africa which is being prepared in accordance with Recommendation E of Resolution 4 of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
- (b) Until the completion and publication of the above-mentioned Gazetteer, recourse may be had to the second edition of the Dictionary of Southern African Place Names, which contains some 4 000 names, in which standardized names are marked with an asterisk.
- (c) With a view to promoting the implementation of Resolutions of the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, reference to these resolutions has been made in the Introduction to this book.

### 3. TRAINING IN APPLIED TOPONYMY

- (a) The expert for South Africa has been invited to prepare a syllabus for Toponymy for the Christian Academy for Tertiary and Secondary Education. This is an institution for distance education and prepares students in all parts of Southern Africa for degrees conferred by London University, Newport University (California, USA), and the Evangelisch Theologisch Faculteit (Louvaine, Belgium). It performs its functions by means of written manuals, sound recordings and video tapes, and the work is done on a part-time basis.
- (b) In order to do comply fully with the requirements in this regard of the UNGEGN, the expert in question would be pleased to serve in the working group for a syllabus for toponymic training courses which is to be established in terms of Resolution 21 of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

### 4. REDUCTION OF EXONYMS

When the Pictorial Atlas of the World was recently translated into Afrikaans, the expert for South Africa acted as consultant for the translation. National official forms of geographical names were indicated and exonyms reduced wherever possible. Being thus published in a reference book, endonyms will be increasingly employed by educational institutions, the media, etc.