

UNITED NATIONS

**GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

Working Paper No.7

**Twenty-first Session
Berlin, 26 August and 6 September 2002**

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Item 4 & 7 of the Provisional agenda*

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS CONCERNING THE EIGHTH UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
AND PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE EIGHTH CONFERENCE**

Various elements concerned with the work of UNGEGN and the Conferences and its
evaluation

{Submitted by Canada}**

* GEGN/21/1

**Prepared by Helen Kerfoot, Vice-Chair, UNGEGN (Natural Resources Canada)

UNITED NATIONS

Twenty-first Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Berlin, 26 August and 6 September 2002

Agenda item 4 Organizational matters concerning the Eighth United Nations
Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names
and item 7 Planning for implementation of the recommendations of the Eighth
Conference

**Various elements concerned with the work of UNGEGN and the Conferences,
and its evaluation**

Paper submitted by Helen Kerfoot, Vice-Chair, UNGEGN

Abstract

Information from participants at previous Conferences and UNGEGN Sessions may be useful in furthering the work at these venues. In some cases, efforts have been made to address issues raised; in others, discussion is still required. The paper provides, in summary form: some responses to the Evaluation of the Sixth Conference (1992), some proposals for consideration from the Twentieth Session of UNGEGN in 2000, and some points raised by the UNGEGN Working Group on Evaluation (1991). It, therefore, collects together assorted thoughts for future reference – indicating progress made and items outstanding.

Prepared by Helen Kerfoot, Vice-Chair, UNGEGN (Natural Resources Canada)

Various elements concerned with the work of UNGEGN and the Conferences, and its evaluation

Helen Kerfoot
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With the vast and rapid developments in the dissemination of geographical names, the challenge for national authorities to make standardized names easily available has grown exponentially. The potential value of the work of UNGEGN and the Conferences in providing the impetus to this world-wide effort grows in concert. However, it is important that the approaches, successes and shortcomings of UNGEGN and the Conferences be reviewed – perhaps periodically, perhaps on a continuing basis.

In the interests of information-gathering for those involved with the organization of UNSCGN and UNGEGN sessions, as well as future work on the evaluation of UNGEGN activities, I summarize some points raised in recent years. Most of these individual elements have not formed part of formal resolutions.

1. Evaluation from the Sixth Conference, 1992

At the Sixth Conference, participants were asked a number of questions about the work of the Conference and how to proceed on future occasions. Here are some steps that have been taken to address items-raised (see WP 34, 17th UNGEGN 1994).

Note: The most useful aspects of the Conference were noted as: the opportunity to come together to make personal contacts; to exchange ideas, experience and documentation; and to increase awareness of innovations, progress and problems of various member states.

What could have been better or more useful? Changes in approach, content, organization, etc. suggested for future conferences

Statement	Response
Improved participation and general benefit of having documentation for review before the Conference	Documents are to be added to the UN ODS system and to be made available on the UNGEGN web site

(b)	Excessive length of oral presentations of various national reports – hence insufficient time for other discussion	Presenters of national reports are being limited to about 10 minutes for their presentations and discussion
(c)	Participants would like scheduled time for working groups, divisions and particular interest groups to convene	The meetings of working groups are now scheduled as part of the sessions of UNGEGN, but this process has not been implemented for the Conferences
(d)	Rules of procedure should be better known	Rules of procedure have been posted on the UNGEGN web site and are distributed as documents at the Conference
(e)	Guidelines should be available for seeking training funds through the UN	A training course was offered (in The Netherlands and Germany) in conjunction with the Eighth Conference
(f)	More contacts should be made with other organizations, and their participation encouraged ...	Increasing links with scientific and technical organizations ...
(g)	Mini-training sessions would be useful for those chairing sessions	Being arranged for the Eighth Conference
(h)	Resolutions should be developed before or during the Conference, rather than at the last moment ...	Every effort is being made to follow this recommendation ...

These are only some of the suggestions made by delegates at the Sixth Conference. Any Working Group involved with evaluation of work could review these suggestions and consider their ongoing implementation. In addition, it would be useful to look at the remaining suggestions to see whether others could be of general benefit.

2. Proposals for consideration from the Twentieth session of UNGEGN, 2000

(A number of these points have also been raised on other occasions.)

- a) Re: UNGEGN sessions
- 1) Decrease the length of the UNGEGN sessions to 7-8 days
 - 2) Consider one UNGEGN meeting between conferences, with greater emphasis on the less expensive division/working group meetings
 - 3) Include an agenda item on the Legal Status of Names. Also interest was expressed in the Terms of Reference of Geographical Names Authorities
 - 4) Consider the advantages of moving some sessions to locations other than New York
 - 5) Greater evaluation of what has been achieved with regard to goals and resolutions of conferences
 - 6) Consider the process of presenting and discussing working papers; useful to have abstracts of resolutions available for individual agenda items
- b) Re: UN Conferences
- 1) Consider having two rapporteurs for plenary sessions, to allow sharing the work load
 - 2) Continuing concern is evident for countries that rarely participate ... look at the reasons, and look at the possibility of funding to assist
 - 3) Encourage users of geographical names and software companies to participate as observers (Could also apply to UNGEGN sessions)
 - 4) Proposal that all Conference documents should be made available on a CD-ROM (or perhaps web site?)
 - 5) Handbooks (or perhaps web site documents?) should be available on toponymy training; for national bodies to deal with standardization processes; for establishing a basic geographical names data base;

3. Report of the Working Group on Evaluation, Paper INF. 55, 15th UNGEGN session, 1991

	Recommendation	Comment
(a)	Revision of Aims and Functions to be more active and action-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved by UNCSGN and ECOSOC in 1993 • Need for ongoing review

(b)	Consider structures (other than Divisions and Working Groups) to help member states not currently participating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So far Divisions and Working Groups have remained the core sub-groups of UNGEGN
(c)	Resolutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep future resolutions to a minimum • Classify resolutions and publish “substantive” resolutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolutions have been grouped and made available by South Africa and Canada • No general agreement over which resolutions are really “substantive” or most useful • Some agreement that some resolutions require revision (this would require additional resolutions)
(d)	Compile and maintain a list of national names authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work was done in 1991 and since, but it is incomplete and not up to date • Requires Secretariat action
(e)	Agreed that potential sources of funds needed to be identified and the work of UNGEGN promoted	Working Group on Publicity and Funding established
(f)	Major initiatives needed in training	... 8th Conference course; PAIGH; South Africa; Baltic Division as well as training provided by individual countries
(g)	Pursue factors hindering implementation of resolutions	Needs follow up
(h)	Zomments on UNGEGN programme and effectiveness of resolutions	Possible follow up of some items cited in item 10, page 11, of INF 55
(i)	mprove circulation of documents to <u>all</u> countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat mails reports to permanent missions of all Member States • the UNGEGN web site is now available for document distribution

(j)	Concern over lack of continuity of participation from session to session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing need for UNGEGN Secretariat to inform Member States of the work of UNGEGN • Participants to convince Member States of continuing need for support
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Other comments from paper INF 55 could also be considered. Possibly some processes could be developed to address some perceived procedural problems (e.g. avoid discussion of non-practical topics, avoid reflecting interests of the countries with advanced names programmes). Recommendations on other issues could also be developed (e.g. encouraging greater coordination with cartographic organizations).

Conclusion

These comments of participants at past meetings appear to give a valuable base for discussion of possible improvements in the functioning of UNGEGN and future Conferences.