

## **Report of the Secretary**

The present report summarizes the major activities carried out by the UNGEGN Secretariat during the period 2002-2004 in the area of geographical names and outlines some future activities for the period 2004 to 2006.

### **A- Major activities undertaken during the period 2002-2004**

Since the 8<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN), held in Berlin in 2002 in conjunction with the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), the UNGEGN Secretariat within the UN Statistics Division, has undertaken a number of actions pertaining to geographical names activities. In this report, we will put emphasis on the major activities dealing with publications, follow-up to resolutions, support to training workshops and participation in working group activities.

#### **1. Publications**

The UNGEGN Secretariat prepared and published the report of the 8<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the report of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of UNGEGN, as well as the last two issues of the UNGEGN Information Bulletin (no 26 & 27). These documents were mailed to all UNGEGN experts, and an electronic copy of each document is available on our website at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>.

At its 21st session in Berlin, in 2002, UNGEGN took the decision to recommend to ECOSOC that the UNGEGN statute be amended to provide for two Vice-Chairpersons and two Rapporteurs. This amendment was endorsed by ECOSOC in October 2002 (ECOSOC decision E/2002/306), and the full amended text of the Statute and Rules of Procedures is available in English as a background paper document and also can be found on our website.

Following up resolution 15 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the Working Group on Publicity and Funding has developed two manuals for publication by the United Nations – one a basic manual for the national standardization of geographical names and the other a technical reference manual on issues and standards for databases, romanization and country names. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) included them in its publication programme for the biennium 2004-2005, and the UNGEGN Secretariat submitted both documents for publication; work on their publications is in progress.

Since its development in April 2002, the UNGEGN website is updated every six months. It's worth noting that more technical papers from the recent Conference are available for general access, and efforts are made to add more papers and to publicize the

site as much as possible. The UNGEGN Secretariat would like to request experts that changes be sent to the Secretariat for timely update of the website; their constructive comments are greatly appreciated.

## **2. Support for training workshops and participation in UNGEGN meeting**

A training course on toponymy was held in Khartoum, Sudan, from 28 January to 5 February 2003. The United Nations Statistics Division helped the Sudan National Committee for Geographical Names organize this successful training course by making it possible for two experts, Professor Ferjan Ormeling of the Netherlands and Dr. Andreas Illert of Germany, to provide an introductory course on toponymy for an audience of 46 participants (half of them women). UNSD has provided travel support to three participants from developing countries to attend the current session of UNGEGN and will support further training courses being planned for 2004 in Australia and Mozambique.

## **3. Working Group activities**

The UNGEGN Secretariat participated in the meeting of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation convened in Seoul, 2-5 December 2003. The main objective of the meeting was to define the general aims and objectives of the Working Group, to review the report and analysis of the Berlin evaluation sheets, to suggest better and more effective ways to implement and follow-up resolutions, to discuss ideas in order to rejuvenate the organization of UNGEGN conferences, and ultimately to prepare a report with a view to presenting it to the twenty-second session of UNGEGN.

## **4. Integration of Geographical Names Data into National and Regional Spatial Data Infrastructures**

The UNGEGN secretariat is continuing to forge ties with the UN Regional Cartographic Conferences and helped the 16<sup>th</sup> United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and Pacific adopt a resolution (no. 3 on Fundamental data) recommending that the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific (PCGIAP) “continue to develop regional fundamental data sets in collaboration with other initiatives, such as the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names; the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, the Database Project and the Second Administrative Level Boundaries Data Set Project.”

Previous UN regional cartographic conferences for Asia and the Pacific as well as for the Americas recognized that standardized geographical names data should be considered in the establishment of national and regional spatial data infrastructures and included in their design, development and implementation. The UNGEGN secretariat is also working to collaborate efficiently with the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and other international bodies involved with geographic information activities.

## **B- Some future activities**

Updating the texts on the pages of the UNGEGN web site is a continuous process. The UNGEGN Secretariat, based on the comments provided by experts, will continue to improve the structure of its web site to better reflect the diverse and interlinked areas covered by standardization of geographical names and geographic information.

UNGEKN Secretariat is increasingly receiving requests on country and major city names. The development of an UNGEGN data base of country names, and major city names (likely with population over 100,000) in Romanized form and with coordinates can address this public need. This data base can be tied to an interactive world map of countries, for access on the UNGEGN website, provided the map base is made available by the UN cartographic section. This data base could also be structured to add various exonyms. This proposal is submitted to the Group of Experts for discussion and if accepted, the data base could be developed through the UNGEGN Secretariat before the next UNGEGN meeting in 2006.