

**Twenty-second Session
New York, 20-29 April 2004**

Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda

**MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TOPONYMIC DATA FILES AND
GAZETTEERS**

South African Geographical Names Database*

*** Prepared by Mr. K.T. Ntsewa, Chairperson of South African Geographical Names
Council**

SOUTH AFRICAN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES DATABASE

The South African Geographical Names Council Act requires the Department of Arts and Culture to establish and maintain a research section and the necessary infrastructure, incorporating a computerised database, a library, reference material and document archives.

To achieve this, the Department of Arts and Culture acquired three databases which all had problems of duplication, the status of approval of certain names, names that were spelt wrongly, names that might be offensive to certain sections of our population, and corrupted names. These databases were:

- (i) HSRC place names database
- (ii) Surveys and Mapping geographical names database
- (iii) US Gazetteer of South Africa (compiled for the government of the USA).

The Department is using these three databases as a reference to create a new, authoritative database for the South African Geographical Names Council in order to avoid duplication and coordinate the process of naming in the whole country.

The new, authoritative database (which for now has geographical names that have been approved since the functioning of the South African Geographical Names Council Act of 1998) has a web-enable geo-reference viewer that provides the functionality to plot latitudes and longitudes on a map, and to view the places with the exact location. This has enabled the Department to deliver on the following:

- the management and monitoring of national place names;
- capturing of new place names on the national place names database;

- monitoring and facilitating progress with regards to applications;
- *retrieving this information easily for use by the SAGNC and DAC;*
- improving co-ordination and reducing duplication in naming;
- spatial representation of the national place names database; and
- facilitation of management information reports.

The Department has identified a need for adaptive, preventative and corrective maintenance to enhance delivery, productivity and user-friendliness of the system. On 23 October 2002 the Department approved that following the system enhancements had been done to the system:

- Remote updating of dataset and on-line approval
- Access to existing gazetteers
- Survey to latitude/longitude coordinate conversion
- Automatic feedback/reporting to applicants
- Automatic addition of approved names to the SAGNC Gazetteer.