

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

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Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda

SUMMARY REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Summary report of the Working Group on Training  
Courses in Toponymy\*

## **Summary report on the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy**

1. The working group stimulates and helps to organise training courses in toponymy, in order to increase awareness of the need for geographical names standardisation, and to help fill the need for qualified personnel. Large countries will probably be able to organise this themselves, but many smaller countries lack the resources to provide such specialised training. The working group helps with the programme, with lecturers and with teaching material, in the form of printed or downloadable manuals or of web courses. In many cases, such teaching material is made available free of charge by countries like Canada or Germany.

2. Financing such courses remains the main bottle neck. At the Berlin conference the following countries, apart from Sudan, where a course was effectuated, asked to have courses: Mexico, Cyprus, Vietnam, Teheran, Guinée, Djibouti, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Yugoslavia, Myanmar and Botswana. Some of these countries are close by the venues where courses will be organised this year, that is Australia and Mozambique, but most are not. If the most welcome support of the UN to course participants (10 scholarships every 2 years) will continue, than we must prioritise.

3. We also must consider which model is most relevant to have these courses: should they be in conjunction with a toponymy conference, like Berlin, with a UNGEGN session, or with a UN regional cartographic conference, or with a conference on sustainable development. The Berlin experience to have them in conjunction with a conference was most worthwhile, but supposedly expensive. Areas where courses have not been held yet are West-Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

4. We must consider how well the web-based courses that are introduced during this session, function: whether they are relevant and accessible, and provide the expertise and skills needed. In theory we will be able to reach many more participants in this way through the web, but in practice we still have to gauge what the loss of face to face contacts might result in.

5. We must consider in our working group whether we should develop templates for names authorities, for gazetteers or toponymical guidelines, and post these on the web as well. In the manuals that are planned to be published this year ample coverage is given to names collection in the field; but a film on this practice might be a welcome addition.

6. Preserving the cultural heritage is becoming more and more important and in this context the collection and use of minority or aboriginal names deserves more attention. It should also be taught how to deal with them, process them next to the official names, codify them in order to safeguard them for later generations.

7. The website of the working group on toponymy courses ([www.toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl](http://www.toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl)) keeps the visitors informed about coming courses, courses held, (this might be of interest if they want to contact the organizers or lecturers) and teaching material available. It is tried to keep it up to date, but hardly ever is information that can be incorporated obtained directly from course organisers.