

For information only - not an official document

UNIS/INF/136
4 April 2006

United Nations Experts Meeting in Vienna
Encourages more Accurate Use of Place Names

VIENNA, 4 April 2006 (UN Information Service) - The 23rd session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) ended in Vienna, Austria today after six working days during which 250 delegates from 22 linguistic groups or geographical divisions around the world met at the Vienna International Centre to discuss ways to increase consistency and accuracy in the use of place names.

The Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (DESA), Paul Cheung, spoke of the relevance of geographical names to Geographical Information Systems (GIS), mapping, statistical data collection and spatial data infrastructure at the opening session of the expert group meeting.

In her opening remarks the UNGEGN Chairperson, Helen Kerfoot, highlighted the challenge of keeping up with an ever-changing world in which technology and communications networks provide instantaneous access to information.

Reports from UNGEGN Divisions and Working Groups indicated substantial progress was being made with respect to technical developments in the field of geographical names data storage and handling, national programmes of name standardization and international programmes of data exchange. Special emphasis was placed on the cultural value of names, the provision of support for geographical names activities in Africa, and collaboration with international organizations engaged in activities ranging from the creation of international standards to humanitarian response operations. It was also reported that nine toponymic training courses had been held since 2004 and that web-based course material was now available on-line.

* * * * *

For further information contact:
Mr. Amor Laaribi
United Nations Statistics Division
Two UN Plaza, DC2-1640, New York 10017
E-mail: Laaribi@un.org
Tel: +1 (212) 963-3042 Fax: +1 (212) 963-4569

(Embedded image moved to file: pic13591.gif)