

**Twenty-third Session
Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006**

**Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda:
Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names**

Report of the Working Group on Country Names

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Report of the Working Group on Country Names

The objective of the Working Group on Country Names is to develop and maintain a list of the names of all countries in the world in the language or languages used in an official capacity within each country, and to present an updated version of this document at each UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN).

Since its last informal meeting at the 22nd UNGEGN Session in New York in 2004, two activities have taken place. First, in 2005 the Working Group submitted to the UNGEGN chair an abridged version of the country names document for inclusion into the forthcoming UNGEGN Technical Manual.

Second, a Working Group meeting was held in the Town Hall of the Prefecture of Lefkada, Greece on November 14-15, 2005. The meeting was attended by the following Working Group members: Elisabeth Calvarin (France), Catherine Cheetham (U.K.), Leo Dillon, convener (U.S.), and Giannis Papaioannou (Greece). Also in attendance from UNGEGN was Dr. Emmanuel Gounaris, representing the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The main purpose of the meeting was to review the document entitled “List of Country Names,” (E/CONF.94/CRP.11) submitted to the Eighth UNCSGN in Berlin 2002, so as to submit an updated draft version to the 23rd UNGEGN Session. This draft version allows an opportunity for comments and input from UNGEGN members so that a final version can be presented to the next UNCSGN meeting in 2007.

Participants at the meeting reviewed recent efforts by members of the Working Group to employ Unicode-compliant digital fonts for the many scripts used in the country names list, to allow for easier transfer and editing. It was noted that there are still a small number of scripts found in the document for which a Unicode-compliant font has not yet been identified.

The meeting confirmed that the UN Terminology Section is the current authority on country names in the official languages of the United Nations. The UN Terminology website (<http://un.unterm.org>), which holds records for each country containing the short and formal names in the six UN official languages, is the successor to UN Terminology Bulletin No. 347/Rev. 1.

The meeting then focused on the format of the Country Names document. Several changes were suggested for the consideration of the Working Group:

? Change in terminology for the labels of country names, from “Short title” and “Full title” to “Short name” and “Formal name,” to be in concordance with the UNTERM website.

? Display the country names in all six UN languages, using the forms found in the UNTERM website.

? Include vowel pointing for Arabic in the UN languages section. (The UNTERM website does not include vowel pointing.)

? The section labeled “Names used by a national authority” was established to provide reference to country names used within member states that are different from those used by the UN. Since some country names used by national authorities cause potential controversy, it was suggested that, rather than display the names within the document, this section could provide a reference to a website or document from a national authority that contains country names used officially within that country. Only those national authorities that request that a reference be included will be featured in this section.

The meeting then focused on updating the content of the List of country names, and the members present went through each entry in the document, discussing what changes were necessary to bring the document up to date. More than 80 country listings were examined for potential change, further research, or clarification.

Participants at the meeting agreed that it would be desirable to compile a list of documents or websites from national authorities that list country names used by those governments, as a useful reference tool for UNGEGN officials. The Working Group invites all UNGEGN members to provide such lists where they exist, and encourages those member states who have not developed such a list to consider doing so.

The meeting then closed with an appreciation of the generous hospitality of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prefecture of Lefkada.

Since the November meeting, various Working Group members have contributed more suggestions concerning the format and content of the List of country names. An informal meeting will be held at the 23rd UNGEGN session to discuss these suggestions.

The Working Group invites any interested experts to become a member of the group. Please contact the convenor (dillonli@state.gov) for any questions.