

Twenty-fourth Session
New York, 20 and 31 August 2007

Item 3 of the provisional agenda
Report of the working groups

**Report by the Convenor of the
Working Group on Romanization Systems**

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1. This brief report covers the period since the twenty-third session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names that was held in Vienna in 2006. Full details will be given in the report of the Working Group to the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

MEETINGS AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

2. In conjunction with a meeting of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN, a two-day **meeting** of the Working Group was held in Tallinn, Estonia, on 9–10 October 2006. 35 experts from 9 countries took part in it. Romanization systems for several languages and preparations for the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names were discussed at the meeting.

3. At the meeting the Working Group decided to support a **resolution on the romanization of Ukrainian** if that would be presented by Ukraine at the Conference. Also a resolution will be initiated that would allow for a Working Group to **examine the status of resolutions** pertaining to an individual romanization system if that system has not been implemented by the sponsoring nation within 10 years following the relevant resolution, or is no longer implemented by the sponsoring nation after that same period of time. The reason for this resolution is that an increasing number of systems approved by UN resolutions seem not to be implemented by the donor countries anymore (of the 28 approved systems, 13 have never been implemented in donor countries concerned, and 6 are in the process of revision, leaving only 9 stable systems for which the degree of implementation, however, also varies greatly).

4. The report of the meeting was published in UNGEGN Information Bulletin No. 33 (March 2007), the report and documents are available online on the Working Group's website at <http://www.eki.ee/wgrs>.

WEBSITE

5. Working Group's website continues to be updated with new documents related to its activities. Among others it contains the *Report on the Current Status of United Nations Romanization Systems for Geographical Names, Ver. 2.2* (January 2003); the systems are available for download as PDF or HTML documents. A slightly revised version of the report has now been published in *Technical reference manual for the standardization of geographical names*, a UN publication (2007).

INDIVIDUAL ROMANIZATION SYSTEMS

6. Since the last meeting of the Working Group in October 2006 there are just a few new developments that can be reported.

7. In May 2007 the Arabic Division of UNGEGN had a meeting in Beirut where several decisions were made, among others one concerning romanization. In the presence of a representative from the League of Arab States a resolution on adopting a Beirut system of romanization for **Arabic** was approved. This will be submitted to the

League of Arab States so that it can be disseminated to all Arab states for review and adoption.

8. In June 2007 it was reported that the modifications to the national romanization of **Byelorussian** were being officialized. There were some differences as compared to the document presented in Tallinn, 2006. The main provisions of the changes are: 1) substitution of the letter \acute{U} (u+acute) in romanization by \breve{U} (u+breve); 2) instead of the apostrophe, palatalization of several sounds will be marked by a combining acute in romanization: дзь → dź, зь → ź, ль → ł, нь → ń, сь → ś, ць → ć.

9. Thanks to Polish colleagues a copy of the Mongolian standard MNS 5217 : 2003 has become available to the Working Group. This is a system representing **Mongolian** Cyrillic letters by Roman counterparts without diacritical marks, using only the apostrophe to denote some vowels. In summary, the romanizations are as follows: а → a, б → b, в → v, г → g, д → d, е → ye, ё → yo, ж → j, з → z, к → k, и → i, й → i', л → l, м → m, н → n, о → o, ө → o' (o), п → p, р → r, с → s, т → t, у → u, ү → u' (u), ф → f, х → x (kh), ц → c, ч → ch, ш → sh, щ → sch, ь → (not romanized), ы → y, ь → i, э → e, ю → yu, я → ya. The apostrophe is used only in the first syllable, e. g. шөно → sho'no. Apparently this system is not intended to be used for rendering geographical names.