

**Twenty-fifth session
Nairobi, 5–12 May 2009**

Item 14 of the provisional agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding

**Progress Report on National Hearings on Geographical Names
(South Africa) ***

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Progress Report on National Hearings on Geographical Names (South Africa)

On 8 February 2008 during the State of the Nation address a commitment was made with regard to geographical names and place names to start a synchronized process across all provinces so we can create a base slate of changes we proposed. It was reported that the project will be guided by the South African Geographical Names Council and Provincial Geographical Names Committees.

On 30 May 2008 in Cape Town the Minister of Arts and Culture and the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) launched an implementation of special cohesion campaigns focusing on geographical names (where a plan to conduct national hearings on geographical names in all nine provinces was presented to the public and the media).

On 16 – 17 October 2008 first hearing was held in Mpumalanga Province at Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Board Auditorium. Although the hearings were not well attended by the public but all District Municipalities were represented and they were able to present their reports on standardization of geographical names.

Eastern Cape Province had its hearing on 30 – 31 October 2008 in East London Christian Centre. The hearings were attended by both the public and representatives of all District Municipalities. Reports from District Municipalities in the Eastern Cape did not only highlight the progress but went as far as identifying geographical names to be reviewed in their respective District Municipalities.

Free State Province had the hearing on 13 February 2009, it was well attended by both Municipalities and political parties in the province. KwaZulu –Natal and North West Provinces held their hearing on the 26 -27 March 2009 and 31 March 2009 respectively.

During the hearings the South African Geographical Names Council, MECs and the Minister were able to have discussions with stakeholders on processes to be followed when standardizing geographical names, public participation and Promotion of Administrative Justice Act of 2000 which is very crucial if municipalities, provinces and national government want to encourage unity and co-operation amongst its own citizens.

The South African Geographical Names Council will continue with this synchronized process to engage the South African public to encourage dialogue around issues of geographical names and place names. In the next few months the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) and the Minister of Arts and Culture will be visiting remaining provinces other remaining provinces to conclude this process.