

**Twenty-sixth Session
Vienna, 2 – 6 May 2011**

Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation

Report of the Working Group on Pronunciation*

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Report of the Working Group on Pronunciation

The Working Group on Pronunciation was formed in response to resolution 11 of the Eighth Conference (Berlin 2002), which noted that the transliteration of geographical names from the script of one language into another script, such as romanization, does not normally provide a guide to the correct pronunciation of such names by persons who are unacquainted with the source language.

Current Work Plan

The current work plan of the Working Group aims to further the inclusion of pronunciation of individual geographical names in national gazetteers and in web based geographical names applications, through International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and/or audio files. To this end, it will provide support for the collection of audio files for the UNGEGN Geographical Names Database and will cooperate with other UNGEGN working Groups particularly those dealing with Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers and Romanization.

Meeting of the Working Group in Nairobi.

A meeting of the Working Group was held in association with the 25th Session of UNGEGN in Nairobi, Kenya, in May 2009. The meeting discussed the current work plan of the Working Group, in particular, the inclusion of pronunciation in IPA in national gazetteers and the question of audio pronunciation files.

Future meetings.

The Working Group will meet in association with the 26th Session of UNGEGN in Vienna in May 2011. The meeting will focus on the preparation of a report for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. A second meeting will be held to finalise the report if required at a later date.

Issues to be addressed at future meetings:

a. Pronunciation in national gazetteers

The Working Group is in general agreement that the inclusion of pronunciation of individual geographical names in printed national gazetteers should be encouraged and that the pronunciation should be presented in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) rather than by non-scientific written methods.

b. Pronunciation in digital audio files in web-based applications.

The Working Group recognises that the use of audio files offers the most practical and efficient method for providing the pronunciation of individual geographical names for most users. The technology for the creation of audio files is widely available and inexpensive. The UNGEGN Geographical Names Database presents a template for the provision of audio pronunciation of geographical names at a national level. The Working Group supports the use of pronunciation audio files in all web based geographical names applications, including on-line national gazetteers and databases. Audio files can be exported easily to other applications, including on-line maps (Google, Yahoo), and satellite navigation (Sat-Nav) systems.

There is a need to establish best practice techniques for recording audio files and for making them available on the web. It is intended that the meeting of the Working Group in Vienna will include a presentation on the creation of pronunciation audio files for geographical names at a national level and their inclusion in an on-line geographical names database, namely, the Placenames Database of Ireland, www.logainm.ie.

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