

**Twenty-sixth session
Vienna, 2-6 May 2011**

Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology *

* Prepared by Staffan Nyström (Sweden), convenor of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

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Background

The Working Group on Toponymic Terminology was set up by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its 14th session in Geneva in May 1989. The main tasks of the group were to produce a new glossary² of toponymic terminology, and to periodically review and update the glossary. The first task was achieved in 2002 when the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, including 375 terms and their definitions in the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), was published in one combined volume with appropriate cross-referencing.

In resolution VIII/3 (2002) the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) recognized that “terminology is not at a standstill, and that future developments will require additions and/or amendments to the definitions of terms”, and recommended that the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology continue to function. At the ninth UNCSGN in New York (2007) a total of 23 entries were ratified and approved for insertion in the Glossary. 12 of these were terms in the Glossary whose definitions had been amended, and the other 11 were additional terms not included in the 2002 Glossary.

Both the Glossary and the Addendum are now found on the UNGEGN website.

Working group meetings

The Working Group on Toponymic Terminology met in Vienna, Austria, in May 2008, and some members of the group also met with the terminology group of ICOS (the International Council of Onomastic Sciences) in Toronto in August 2008. A little more than a year later – in December 2009 – the ICOS Terminology Group met again in Vienna and as the present convenor of the UNGEGN Working Group I was invited to join their meeting. The venue was organized as a workshop with free and spontaneous discussions. We systematically went through the emerging ICOS terminology list and compared all the shared terms with the UNGEGN Glossary and discussed in depth their meanings and definitions.

The most recent meeting with the UN Working Group on Toponymic Terminology took place in Uppsala, Sweden, on October 27th 2010. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss some suggested corrections and amendments in the UNGEGN glossary that emerged as a result of the joint meeting with the terminology group of ICOS in Vienna in December 2009. All UNGEGN members were invited to participate in this meeting in Uppsala.

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² The first glossary had been completed in 1984, with revisions in 1986 and 1987.

The ICOS terminology group will meet again in Uppsala on April 8–9 with the primary goal to complete their terminology list. I will participate at this event as well, and as far as possible argue for the use of common terms and common definitions in the two glossaries.

Work plan and upcoming actions

The Working Group of Toponymic Terminology will propose and initiate a process for creating a database from the existing records of the UNGEGN Glossary (2002) and its Addendum (2007). If the suggested database is realized, the Glossary will be more flexible, additions and amendments will be much easier to handle, and cross-references and comparisons between the language versions will be quicker. This matter will be discussed at the 26th UNGEGN session in Vienna in May 2011.

In accordance with resolution VIII/3 the Working Group will also continue to discuss the approved and published terms and propose further amendments and additions when needed. During the time period 2009–2011 the following amendments and additions have been in focus.

No	IN THE GLOSSARY NOW	PROPOSED
090	feature, hydrographic → Topographic feature consisting of water, or associated mainly with water but not consisting of dry land. <i>Examples:</i> lake; underground reservoir; but not an island.	feature, hydrographic → Topographic feature consisting of water, or associated mainly with water but not consisting of dry land. <i>Examples:</i> lake, ocean, river, pond, reservoir.
247	odonym → Proper noun of a traffic route feature. <i>Examples:</i> ...	odonym → Proper noun of a transportation route feature. <i>Examples:</i> ...
246	noun, proper A word that uniquely identifies an individual person, place or thing. <i>Examples:</i> Albert, Beijing, Budapest	noun, proper A linguistic expression that uniquely identifies an individual person, place, animal or object. <i>Examples:</i> Albert, Beijing, Snoopy (a dog), Titanic (a ship).
216	name, geographical Name applied to a feature on Earth; a special case of a → topographic name or a → toponym .	name, geographical Name applied to a geographic or topographic feature or object; an alternative term for → place name or → toponym .
249	onomastics (a) The science that has as its object the study of → names (b) The activity or process of giving names	onomastics The science that has as its object the study of → names
250	oronym Name of a vertically structured formation of the terrain (including the sea bed), for example, names of mountains, mountain	oronym Name of an elevated feature in the terrain (below water surface also <i>hydrooronym</i>), for example, names of mountains, mountain

	ranges, sea mounts, hills or highlands. <i>Examples: ...</i>	ranges, sea mounts, hills or highlands. <i>Examples: ...</i>
338	toponomastics The activity or process of conferring → toponyms .	toponomastics The science that has as its object the study of → toponyms .
339	toponym Proper noun applied to a → topographic feature . Comprehensive term for → geographical names and → extraterrestrial names .	toponym Proper noun applied to a → topographic feature ; an alternative term for → geographical name or → place name .
344	toponymy (a) The science that has as its object the study of → toponyms in general and of → geographical names in particular. (b) The totality of → toponyms in a given region.	toponymy The totality of → toponyms in a given region.
A343	toponymization The act of producing a → toponym (i.e. a proper noun) from a common noun or other part of speech. Examples: producing the toponym Bath (England), place of Roman baths, Ira ... etc.	toponymization The act of producing a → toponym (i.e. a proper noun) from a common noun, a proper noun other than a toponym or any other part of speech. Examples: producing the toponym Bath (England), place of Roman baths, Vilhemina (Sweden, a town) from a personal name, Ira... etc.
		ADDITIONS
		microtoponym → proper noun referring to smaller or more insignificant objects like fields, pastures, fences, stones, marshes, bogs, ditches etc., and in general used locally by only a limited group of people; alternatively called → minor name
		name, minor <i>See</i> microtoponym.
		settlement name → proper noun referring to all kinds of human settlements of a more or less permanent nature (cities, towns, villages, hamlets, farms, ranches, houses, etc.). <i>Examples:</i> Paris, Turku, Yokohama, Nofim (a house).