
**UNITED NATIONS
GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

GEGN/26/11

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

29 April 2011

Item 3 of the Provisional Agenda

Report of the Secretariat of the Group of Experts

Report of the UNGEGN Secretariat *

* Submitted by the UNGEGN Secretariat

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This report summarizes the major geographical names activities carried out by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Secretariat, United Nations Statistics Division, during the period 2009 to the first quarter of 2011. The UNGEGN Secretariat has undertaken a number of actions in pursuance of resolutions and recommendations of the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN), held in New York in August 2007, and the twenty-fifth session of UNGEGN, held in Nairobi in May 2009. This report will highlight the major activities of the UNGEGN with regard to publications, outreach, support for training workshops, and the database on country/city names.

UNGEGN Publications

(i) UNGEGN Information Bulletin: Four issues of the UNGEGN Information Bulletin (Nos. 37 to 40) were produced. Electronic copy of all documents are available on the UNGEGN website at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/bulletin.html>.

(ii) UNGEGN Media Kit: The Working Group on Publicity and Funding, with the assistance of the Secretariat, has developed a Media Kit in response to Resolution IX/10 which recommended that the UN Statistics Division publish a Press or Media Kit “to assist countries in promoting the standardization of their geographical names and the work of the Group of Experts”.

A folder had been previously designed and printed and an English language version of 12 information sheets has been completed early 2011. A copy of the folder containing these information sheets and other associated publicity material, has been made available for each country represented at the 26th Session of UNGEGN in Vienna. The information sheets are also available on the UNGEGN website at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/mediakit.html>.

The media kit will be further discussed under agenda item 13.

(iii) Postcard: A postcard “A map, a name, an identity ...” was prepared for the 26th session of UNGEGN, with background theme from the venue – Vienna, to serve as an aid to create awareness geographical names among those who send and receive them and promoting names issues. The postcard was developed and prepared by the Chair of UNGEGN, through the Working Group on Publicity and Funding, and with design and technical support from the Secretariat. The postcard is part of the press kit developed by the Working Group.

(iv) UNGEGN poster: Based on the design of the press kit cover, the Secretariat together with the UNGEGN Chair created an UNGEGN poster for general use. The poster will be displayed at the 26th Session and will be available online for Experts to use.

The UNGEGN website

In fall 2010, the website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/default.html>) went through major restructuring. The newly designed site was launched on 4 January 2011 now giving UNGEGN its own web portal thereby stressing the importance of the Group.

The new design streamlined structures and is intended to make the material on geographical names more accessible. The site contains around 20 general pages, 10 related to the UNGEGN conferences, 28 related to the UNGEGN sessions, 13 related to the working groups. In the process of the re-design, over 13,000 documents were transferred and re-linked. All 40 issues of the UNGEGN Bulletin/Newsletter are now made available online.

Since the launch on 4 January 2011, the site had over 4,000 visits and nearly 18,000 page views, where the home page received 25% and the 26th session 9% of the page views.

The UNGEGN Geographical Names Database

In pursuance of resolution IX/6 of the ninth UNCSGN, the Geographical Names Database, a geo-referenced database to store the names of countries and major cities in different languages, has previously been developed by UNGEGN in collaboration with the Secretariat. The database is available online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/geonames/>.

The database is currently updated quarterly. The last upload was on 9 March 2011; the next one is planned for 1 May 2011 on the occasion of this UNGEGN session in Vienna.

The current database status is as follows:

- 192 countries and areas
- 3,131 cities (2009: 1900)
- Over 40 Romanization systems (2009: 30)
- Over 8,500 names (2009: 4,200) where
 - o About 270 are endonyms for country names
 - o About 2,500 are country names in the six official UN languages sourced from UN Terms including short and formal name
 - o Over 3,100 are city endonyms
 - o About 1,200 city exonyms sourced from UNGEGN and UN Terms
 - o Nearly 1,500 Romanized names (2009: 600)

In order to assist the user with the pronunciation of the city names in the various languages, sound files have been added to the database for many geographical names. The database currently stores sound files for 834 cities from 31 countries.

Experts as well as the general public can access and review the country and city names in different languages from all over the world. The Secretariat appreciates all past submissions and greatly encourages Experts to send additional material or corrections.

Support for training workshops

The United Nations Statistics Division has continued to provide funding for participation in toponymic training courses. The Division provided travel support to 3 experts to conduct a training courses on toponymy that took place in Yaounde in November 2010. The Secretariat is also supporting the participation of 2 experts from developing countries at the 26th session of UNGEGN in Vienna.

Future activities

Updating the UNGEGN website is a continuous process. The UNGEGN secretariat, based on the comments provided by experts, will continue to improve the structure and contents of its website. In particular, the Secretariat will also work on scanning and making available online documentation from all previous Sessions and all previous Conferences. The Secretariat will also continue to process submissions for the Geographical Names Database in a timely manner.

The UNGEGN secretariat will continue to work with the Working Group on Publicity and Funding on the finalization and translation of the press kit to assist countries in promoting the standardization of their geographical names and the work of the Group of Experts.