

28<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN Session  
New York, 28 April – 2 May 2014

Opening remarks Acting Chair:

- Again, I Welcome to all delegates, observers, United Nations bodies and members of the Secretariat – at last count 140 delegates are attending , representing 46 member states, with 8 observers also attending
- It is recognised that a number of delegates who have been attending for a number of years are no longer with us, due to retirement and changing employment circumstances – whereas we will miss the company of these colleagues, we do have the opportunity to welcome new delegates and benefit from their experience and skills.
- Are we aware of any delegates or former delegates who have passed away since the last session – if so should we mention them here?
- It was proposed that we would be holding this meeting in Bangkok, but were unable to complete the organisation requirements in time for this to occur. However in keeping with Resolution X/2 from the 2012 United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names, we are still pursuing this option for the 2016 Session.
- I take this opportunity to remind the delegates of two operational matter that we need to follow:
  - The purpose of UNGEGN is to promote best practice in the naming processes, data storage, office management and so forth in relation to geographical names and to raise emerging issues, trends and solutions that will benefit all participating Member States. Item 2:3 of the Statute of Rules and Procedures specifically states that:

***Questions involving national sovereignty shall not be discussed by the Group of Experts.***

As this body has no mandate to provide a solution to such issues, the raising of them in this session can detract from the purpose of UNGEGN and save valuable time that could be put to better use.

- Please be aware that there are a many papers to be presented. In keeping with past practice, delegates are invited to present a 10 minute maximum summary of the paper only, outlining the salient points in order to leave a reasonable time for questions and discussion on the issues covered. We are anxious that more time for questions and discussion be available and the chairs of the various portions of the

meeting will be aiming to provide this opportunity. Please feel comfortable in asking any question that you may have as the answer can benefit us all.

- On behalf of the Division Chairs and Working Group convenors, I would invite all delegates to be involved in the various side events which have been scheduled. The strength of UNGEGN is the participation of Member States and delegates in these groups – please become involved.
- The Australian Mission in collaboration with the Statistics Division will be hosting an opening reception for all delegates this evening at 6:30 at the Australian mission on 42nd street. That is 150 East 42<sup>nd</sup> street
- Finally, I trust you will find this Session of benefit to you as you work towards standardising geographical names within your jurisdiction.