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Implementation of Resolution and Activities Relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

> Plea for Creating a New Geographic-Linguistic Division For North Africa *

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28th UNGEGN Session

PLEA FOR CREATING A NEW GEOGRAPHIC-LINGUISTIC DIVISION

FOR NORTH AFRICA.

By Hamid OUKACI and Brahim ATOUI

This paper is a plea for the creation of a new Division of UNGEGN to North Africa to a hand to help countries south of the Maghreb countries in terms of standardization of geographical names but also, the result of close cooperation established between the UNGEGN and ECA/UN and the African Union, to harmonize them cutting the current divisions in Africa. This alignment might be complemented by the creation within the UNGEGN, a new Division for North Africa.

THE DIFFERENT AFRICAN GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS UNDER THE UNGEGN:

Africa is currently divided, in the UNGEGN, in four linguistic-Geographical divisions: the South Division, the EastDivision, the West Division and the Central Division.

These divisions are actually based on geographical division rather than linguistic.

Some African countries also belong to other territoriallyextra-African divisions such as Lusophone African countries, members of the Portuguese language Division, the French-speaking African countries, members of the French Division or that of South Africa, member of several divisions belonging to Europe including the 'Dutch and German-speaking divisions' and the 'United Kingdom Division'.

There is no North African Division. North Africa countries are members of the Arabic Division. And this in contrast to the division into use in the ECA / UN and African Union.

II-THE CURRENT DIVISION OF AFRICA IN THE AFRICANBODIES INCLUDING THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMISSION /UNand the AFRICAN UNION

The model of UNGEGN division does not correspond to that used in African political bodies in particular in the ECA / UN and the African Union

The division of Africa is purely geographically.

The Different current geographical divisions in the ECA/ UN and the African Union

Africa West Division Africa Central Division Africa North Division Africa East Division



Africa South Division



WEST AFRICA : Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde ,Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea a Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

But Mali, Tchad and Niger can be also part of the North Africa as mentioned in light green

CENTRAL AFRICA: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republicof Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, SaoTomé and Principe, Chad.

<u>Chad can also be part of the Central Division and / or West Division as well as</u> <u>Mauritania, which is also in the Western Division or the Sudan which is also in the</u> <u>Eastern Division.</u>

NORTH AFRICA : Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, SouthSudan.

EAST AFRICA:Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania,

SOUTHERN AFRICA:South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

NEED FOR ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE UNGEGN, THE ECA / UN AND THE AU.

By the establishment of theTask Team for Africa, and the dynamic resulting from and by the growing involvement of ECA/ UN and A/U in the activities of UNGEGN and the standardization of geographical names in Africa, the harmonization of division between the UNGEGN and those two bodies, would be a major asset for a coordination up to give a new impetus to cooperation that could be beneficial for the standardization of geographical names in Africa.

Thus, the establishment of a Division for North Africa would be one factor contributing to that harmonization.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TOCREATEA DIVISIONFOR NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES?

The proposed Division (would include the following countries: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Mali, Niger and Chad.



Countries proposed to be part of the new North African Division.

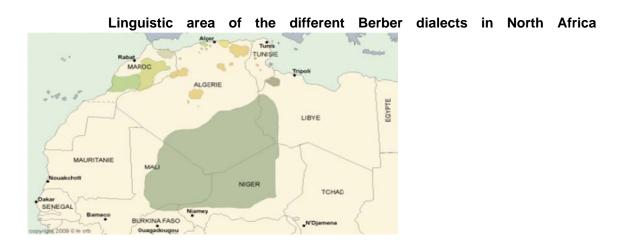
It is understood that under the rules of the UNGEGN which clearly states that 'Countries decide for themselves the division(s) to which they wish to belong, some belong tomore than one division', these countries continue to be part of other divisions of their choice like, for example Mauritania which is part of the Arabic Division and the Western Division.)

These countries share not only the spatial but also the culture and the language.

Indeed, if we observe the linguistic map, we notice that many of these countries share the Berber language. And therefore all the space covered by this language, carries a toponymy resulting of the Tuareg or the Arabic languages.

Arabic is spoken not only in almost all of these countries specially in their Northern territories, but in some countries like Chad, it has even the status of official language.

SPATIAL AND LINGUISTIC HOMOGENEITY:



The space covered by the Berber speaking, in addition to Algeria and Libya, covers more than half of Mali and Niger and Burkina Faso in its northern part.

TheTuareg, next to the Arabic and other local languages such as Bambara, are the languages spoken by the entire population of these countries and therefore the place names, are appointed in these languages shared between these countries.



Map of the official languages used in Africa

This map of the official languages in use, shows the homogeneity of these northern countries, in terms of language, where we see that the Arabic language is official in many of those countries besides the French and the English.

On the other hand, it was noticed that African countries proposed to be part of the new division are not or very little, participating to the activities of UNGEGN; Unlike the North Africa Arab countries that are not only very active in the UNGEGN but also in their respective countries and in the region itself where several meetings and activities in the field of geographical namesare recorded.

Countries such as Mali, Niger and Chad could benefit from the experience of Northern countries and thus benefit from the activities in the standardization of geographical names within the new division, and this through technical meetings, correspondence, exchangesetc..,

In accordance with the principles set out in the UNGEGN regulation, in particular that 'the number of linguistic / geographical divisions and their composition may be revised, if necessary. 'And that a country must decide for itself the division to which it wishes to belong. A country may be a member of another division provided that the nature of its participation does not change the linguistic/geographical character of the concerned division(s)'.

Given the positive cooperation, established between theUNGEGN, ECA / UNand the AU, with the goal of a better alignment with these two instances, with the recorded dynamics of Africa in the field of geographical names and in order maintain this momentum, it is proposed the creation of a new Division for North Africa.

There is no doubt that this division once created, would be a very stimulating factor for the development of the toponymic activity in the African region. It would allow countries, which until this day, do not benefit enough from the standardization of geographical names, to join us and participate in the progress of the standardization of geographical names.

It is also to note that the member of the proposed Division have agreed to meet next September in Algiers and in the presence of ECA / A and GENUNG for a first meeting to coordinate the activities Gazetteer them especially with regard to the adoption of a Romanization system specific to this Division.