

**Twenty-eight session
28 April – 2 May 2014**

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

Report of the divisions

Africa South Division Report *

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UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERT ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
AFRICA SOUTH DIVISION REPORT

Twenty Eighth (28th) Session, New York 28th April - 2nd May 2014.

Geographical Activities from member countries

Botswana: Botswana continues to make efforts to resuscitate the Botswana Place Names Commission (PNC). Several meetings were held with relevant authorities to try and show case the importance of having a committee which will deal with issues of name standardization in the country. The department has made efforts to establish an interim committee with key stakeholders (University of Botswana, Water Affairs, National Museum, Agriculture, Lands and Housing, Botswana Police, Tribal authorities and District Commissioners) which will address the submitted Cabinet Memorandum which seeks to resuscitate the Botswana Place Names Commission.

However the department has continued in its effort to embark upon an awareness campaign to educate ministries on the importance of correct spelling of names and documenting their history. A one day workshop was held for Senior Management of the Department of Surveys and Mapping (DSM) this was conducted by three officers, the main items were the establishment of names authorities, Standardisation of Geographical names, Gaborone Action Plan and challenges of the collection of geonames. The workshop was a success; the plan is to organize three such workshops for other government organization for them to understand the importance of geographical names. There is also a plan to invite member countries in October this year for a one day meeting to discuss challenges faced in establishing geographical names authorities.

Botswana continues to populate geographical names using freeware software supplied by ECA. Settlements with their locations have been captured the process will be continued to cover other features; however ECA assistance is still required.

South Africa

The South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) continues to be actively involved in geographical names activities. The naming of geographical features in South Africa is part of the process of transformation of South African Heritage Landscape in order to forge a common national identity and nationhood. The ushering in of a new society through naming has always received attention at the highest level of governance since the advent of democracy in 1994 and it is also part of symbolic reparation as recommended by Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In line with its mandate of publishing gazettes on approved geographical names, the Department and the South African Geographical Names Council has published a comprehensive gazetteer of all geographical names approved since the advent of democracy. This is to mark the 20 years of democracy and freedom.

Mozambique: There was no report received from Mozambique Geographical Names Institute (INGEMO), contacts have been made, response still awaited.

Swaziland: Geographical Names Activities of in Swaziland is minimal due to the non existence of names authorities or boards in the country. Attempts has been made to set up a names authority in the 1980,s but not much has been accomplished. To date discussions are on going, but these are not formalised. The councils only meet to discuss street naming but this is not a continuous exercise. Efforts are on going to find out the appropriate organisation to coordinate the committee.

Zimbabwe

Geographical Names Committee was in existence but has not been functional for some time. An updated report since the last meeting is still awaited.

Malawi: Report received.

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