

**Twenty-eighth session
New York, 28 April - 2 May 2014**

Item 3 on the Provisional Agenda

Report of the Secretariat of the Group of Experts

Report of the UNGEGN Secretariat *

* Submitted by the UNGEGN Secretariat

Report of the UNGEGN Secretariat

1. Introduction

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Secretariat, continues to provide support required to continue the important work of promoting the standardization of geographical names. This report summarizes the major activities carried out by the UNGEGN Secretariat during the period August 2012 to the first quarter of 2014. The report highlights the actions undertaken in pursuance of resolutions and recommendations of the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSSGN), and the twenty-seventh session of UNGEGN both held in New York in July 2012. In addition, it also focuses on the creation of promotional and training material, the preparation and delivery of toponymic training workshops, and the management and maintenance of the World Geographical Names Database.

2. UNGEGN Publications

(a) **UNGEGN Manuals:** In order to meet increasing requests for hard copies, the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names was reprinted. With the approval of the Bureau, a new attractive cover was designed and the 2007 addendum included. The Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Names (English volume) was also reprinted. Both manuals are now available in hard copy and on-line¹.

(b) **UNGEGN Information Bulletin:** Four issues of the UNGEGN Information Bulletin (Nos. 43 to 46) were prepared, circulated to the UNGEGN mailing list and published on the website² in March 2014, October 2013, May 2013 and December 2012. An attempt was made to improve the look and appeal of the Bulletin, beginning with the October 2013, issue number 45.

(c) **Book Marker:** An informative book marker in two colours, highlighting the working groups and inviting persons to visit the UNGEGN world geographical names database has been added to the existing promotional products. They were prepared in consultation with the UNGEGN Chair, the Working Group on Publicity and Funding, and with design and technical support from the Secretariat. The book markers are for distribution during the 28th Session of UNGEGN and other UNGEGN awareness events.

(d) **UNGEGN Pull-up Banner:** To increase the existing store of promotional material, a general UNGEGN pull-up portable banner was designed and procured. The

¹<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/publications.html>

² <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/bulletin.html>.

design incorporates the concept of the skyline used in the 2012 postcard and 2014 book markers. The pull up banner will be displayed at the 28th Session Map and Poster Exhibition, in the reception area of the United Nations Secretariat Building. A power point slide of the banner was also created and will be made available to the Group of Experts.

3. The UNGEGN Website

The Secretariat continues to maintain the UNGEGN website³ and repository of technical documents on the standardization of geographical names. This is being done through the collaborative efforts of the members of the group of experts and Ms. Helen Kerfoot, former UNGEGN chair. With Ms. Kerfoot's and other Experts support thousands of session documents have been scanned and uploaded to the UNGEGN website. Work continues with the search, collation, scanning and uploading of Conference documents beginning with the most recent, and working backwards to past years. Currently there are over 1,600 technical documents related to early meetings of the UNGEGN Expert Group and UNGEGN Sessions, and some 1,800 Conference documents. This exercise has therefore strengthened UNGEGN's central repository of technical documents and on-line offerings.

We also continue to monitor the number of visits on the webpages. For the 20 month period from August 2012 to March 2014, there have been 8,000 visits to the UNGEGN website; that is approximately 400 visits per month. Most visits were from users in the United States, Spain, Finland and Canada.

4. Capacity Development

(a) **Training workshops:** The United Nations Statistics Division has continued to provide support for the planning and delivery of toponymy training courses. From 17 to 21 June 2013, an UNGEGN training workshop was held in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Three experts and participants from five countries were provided travel support; and training material for the course was shipped.

(b) **Session Participation:** The Secretariat is also supporting the participation of 3 experts from developing countries at the current 28th Session of UNGEGN in New York.

(c) **On Line Web Course in Toponymy:** Following up on Resolution X/11⁴, from the 10th Conference in 2012, the web-based course in toponymy was placed on the UNGEGN web site⁵. This course was developed by the United Nations Group of Experts

³ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/default.html>

⁴ Web-based course in toponymy

⁵ http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/_data_ICAcourses/index.html.

on Geographical Names Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy and the Commission on Education and Training (CET) of the International Cartographic Association, with financial support from the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat. The objectives of the UNGEGN-ICA web course on toponymy are to provide a good starting point for new toponymic staff and to contribute to their basic education and training.

5. The UNGEGN Geographical Names Database

The UNGEGN Secretariat continues to maintain and support the Geographical Names Database⁶ that was developed in 2004, in pursuance of resolution IX/6 of the ninth Conference on the standardization of geographical names.

Users are able to access short and full names of countries (193 UN Member States), their capitals, and the major cities (population over 100,000) via the World Geographical Names Database web application. Authoritative city endonyms are provided mainly by national name authorities and sound files are being added to assist users with pronunciation of city names.

The database is currently updated quarterly, and as at 12, March 2014 had 5,876 geographical names, consisting of 193 countries and 3,343 cities. There are also 974 sound files. The Secretariat appreciates all past submissions and greatly encourages experts to send additional material or corrections.

6. Future Activities

The UNGEGN Secretariat remains committed to advancing the standardization of geographical names and supporting the Sessions and Conferences of the Group of Experts. In doing so, it will seek to strengthen interaction with the Bureau, Divisional Chairs and Working Group Conveners. Some specific activities of importance are; continued improvements to the contents of the website, processing submissions and updating the World Geographical Names Database in a timely manner, continued support of training courses in toponymy and also provide advice on forging the partnerships required to advance its work programmes.

⁶ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/geonames/>.