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

**CRP.1**

**Twenty-ninth session  
Bangkok, Thailand, 25 – 29 April 2016**

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**3 May 2016**

## **Draft Decisions**

Submitted by the Rapporteur

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\* Prepared by Trent Palmer, United States of America

B. Decisions brought to the attention of the Council

2. The following decisions adopted by the Group of Experts are brought to the attention of the Council:

**29/101**

Report of the Chair

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the report of the Chair;

(b) Welcomed the initiative of the Bureau to reflect on how the working modalities of UNGEGN could be improved and noted the specific proposals made by the Bureau;

(c) Agreed that it is indeed useful to periodically review the working methods of the group to respond effectively to evolving policy needs and the changing ICT environment;

(d) Encouraged the Bureau to elaborate in a transparent and consultative manner with all member states specific proposals for review and possible adoption by the 11th Conference in 2017 to be forwarded to ECOSOC for approval. The discussion should include - but is not limited to - the review of the periodicity and length of Conferences and UNGEGN sessions, the articulation of the business case and a long-term vision for UNGEGN, as well as the definition of the relationship with UN-GGIM.

**29/102**

Report of the Secretariat of the Group of Experts

The Group of Experts:

(a) Acknowledged the report of the secretariat; and expressed appreciation for the comprehensive report describing the activities undertaken in the two year period in support of the work of the Group of Experts.

**29/103**

Reports of the divisions

The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the reports submitted by 18 of the 24 geographical/linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts;

(b) Considered in summary form the principal themes and topics addressed by the reports;

(c) Emphasized that the divisional reports demonstrated considerable progress in the field of geographical names standardization; that the divisions reported impressive achievements and positive collaboration, however recognizing that challenges remained;

(d) Encouraged experts to read the submitted papers in order to understand the detail in the 18 divisional reports that could not be conveyed by the brief summary;

(e) Noted that divisional reports varied considerably in their structure, length and content: some divisions reported on divisional activities, projects and meetings, while others concentrated on country-based information. This reflected the fact that the divisions enjoy somewhat different focuses and face a variety of challenges and resource constraints;

(f) Agreed that consideration will be given by the Bureau regarding the creation of a template for divisional reports.

#### **29/104**

Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations

The Group of Experts:

(a) Noted the three written reports and one oral report originating from four liaison officers and international organizations;

(b) Noted that two other liaison reports will be considered separately under agenda items 8 and 9;

(c) Recognized that it is important to maintain the relationship between the Group of Experts and these organizations.

#### **29/105**

Report of the Task Team for Africa

The Group of Experts:

(a) Thanked the Task Team for its efforts, taking note of the report from the Coordinator;

(b) Recognized that the complex situation in Africa requires a concerted effort by all parties to help achieve the objectives of the Group of Experts;

(c) Noted the valuable work accomplished at three events (one colloquium and two training

courses) held in Africa since the 28<sup>th</sup> session;

(d) Encouraged careful consideration of the Gaborone Action Plan (GAP) at the colloquium to be held at the University of Blida in Algeria in November 2016 in collaboration between UNGEGN and the Task Team for Africa.

## **29/106**

Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the reports presented under this agenda item;

(b) Welcomed the efforts of the Working Group to improve the implementation of resolutions in national standardization of geographical names programmes and increase the effectiveness of the activities of the Group of Experts towards this end;

(c) Expressed appreciation for the Working Group's programme of work, including its preparation and analysis of session and conference evaluation surveys, and the creation and maintenance of the database of resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(d) Also expressed appreciation for the Working Group's involvement in encouraging experts to refer to resolutions in papers submitted at conferences and sessions;

(e) Thanked the Working Group for conducting the 29<sup>th</sup> session workshop to promote the implementation of resolutions for the topic of commemorative naming;

(f) Recognized the proposal by the Task Team for Africa to create an Africa North and the Sahel Division. This issue remains under consideration, although the objection of the Arabic Division was noted;

(g) Expressed appreciation of the secretariat and UNGEGN Members for compiling and archiving conference and session documents on the UNGEGN web site. The Secretariat agreed to provide continued support for the project. It was recognized that this archive is a valuable resource for the Group of Experts and its use is encouraged.

## **29/107**

Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

The Group of Experts:

(a) Noted that three toponymic training courses were held since the 28th Session and that there are three planned or potential courses. Additional online learning tools have been developed;

(b) Reported that teaching materials used in UNGEGN training courses are now posted on the web site of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division;

(c) Recognized the report of the liaison officer of the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History, noting that its standard toponymy course could be adapted in its duration and content and was planned to be available online;

(d) Noted the toponymy workshop held in Tunis in January 2015 was successful in guiding the activities of national committees of toponymy. The roadmap to establish national authorities for geographic names standardization is to be further elaborated and could serve as a model for use in other countries. The leadership of the UNGEGN Vice-Chair from Tunisia was especially appreciated as fundamental to the success of this course;

(e) Recognized the ongoing production of an advanced toponymy manual, which aims to provide guidance on 44 themes associated with the standardization of geographical names. Experts were encouraged to volunteer to author the remaining six planned chapters. It was reported that the final publication will be freely available on the UNGEGN web site in 2017;

(f) Noted the publication of an online toponymic training course in French, downloadable and freely available for public use; an option of a three-week tutored period (subject to cost), could result in a citation or, in certain cases, a diploma;

(g) Discussed the mandate of UNGEGN to facilitate capacity building in standardization of geographical names, recalling the history and evolution of toponymic training courses. It is recognized that these courses have covered multiple geographical names topics, tailored to specific requirements. It was noted that capacity building was pivotal to the ongoing success of UNGEGN, and the Working Group and Secretariat were congratulated on its past work and future plans. The UNSD Director outlined modalities for contributing financially to these courses;

(h) Encouraged Member States to be proactive and innovative in seeking opportunities to deliver training in association with other geospatially-focused activities;

(i) Expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Working Group.

**29/108**

Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Welcomed the reports presented under this agenda item;
- (b) Thanked the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers for its work and noted the continued high level of interest in its area of responsibility, as evidenced by the large number of reports;
- (c) Noted that the majority of reports addressed national activities, however two dealt with multi-national efforts;
- (d) Observed that a common theme of the reports was the expanding use of geographical names data for an increasing range of purposes within national and regional spatial data infrastructures, in line with Resolution VIII/6;
- (e) Encouraged ongoing national developments in data modeling and management including the “linked data” method to structure, integrate and publish geographical names data;
- (f) Stressed the importance of establishing and providing standardized geographical names as an essential part of geospatial information management, as recognized by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM);
- (g) Noted the potential of geospatial data (including standardized geographical names) in supporting the geospatial dimension in the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- (h) Requested the Working Group, in conjunction with the UNGEGN Secretariat, to validate and update the hyperlinks published at the UNGEGN web site;
- (i) Acknowledged that action needs to be taken to maintain and update UNGEGN's World Geographical Names Database and encouraged the submission of data to support this initiative.

## **29/109**

Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Noted the reports presented under this agenda item;
- (b) Thanked the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology for its activities;
- (c) Recommended that the Working Group consider the proposed changes and additions to the glossary of terms in its upcoming programme of work;
- (d) Requested a volunteer to assume the position of Convenor following the Eleventh Conference.

## **29/110**

### Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems

#### The Group of Experts:

- (a) Expressed appreciation for the Working Group's efforts;
- (b) Recognized the history of the Working Group, the current status and implementation of UN romanization systems, and the update to the working group's web site;
- (c) Particularly noted the increased liaison with ISO TC46/WG3. An updated standard for the romanization of Chinese had been published by ISO, and work was progressing towards transliteration of scripts relating to Thai;
- (d) Recorded the implementation of UN romanization systems approved at the Tenth Conference;
- (e) Recommended increasing the public and academic awareness of the existence and use of the UN-approved romanization systems;
- (f) Urged the countries with non-Roman-script languages not yet having United Nations-approved systems to devise, implement and submit their national systems of romanization for approval at forthcoming United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names;
- (g) Also noted the introduction of a programme of translation of Japanese generic terms into English for use on maps and other materials, to facilitate communication for international visitors;
- (h) Recognized the complexities in adopting a partial translation of toponyms and applauded the possibilities of addressing the issues by Working Group members and at regional levels;
- (I) Noted that the Task Team for Africa proposed that particular attention be given to unwritten languages in Africa and that a group be established to address this subject, as well as other groups to study the Roadmap and toponymy of the Sahelian region.

## **29/111**

### Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names

#### The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the reports submitted under the agenda item;
- (b) Acknowledged the work of the Working Group and expressed appreciation for its efforts.

## **29/112**

Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Noted the reports presented under this agenda item;
- (b) Thanked the Working Group on Publicity and Funding for its efforts and encouraged the Working Group to continue its excellent work;
- (c) Acknowledged the advancements in the digital presence of the Group of Experts through the media kit, the UNGEGN web site, the Twitter presence and the webcast via the YouTube channel;
- (d) Supported the establishment of a World Geographical Names Day in 2017 to highlight the importance and relevance of the Group of Experts and the standardization of geographical names;
- (e) Agreed that this working group would be responsible for continuing to coordinate the promotion of UNGEGN and would work with the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation on the proposed World Geographical Names Day.

## **29/113**

Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the reports submitted under this agenda item, and acknowledged the very thorough efforts of the Working Group;
- (b) Noted the Working Group's decision to retain the definitions of endonym and exonym as documented in the 2007 addendum to the UNGEGN Glossary of Terms;
- (c) Acknowledged the Working Group's decision not to define the use of exonyms in a normative way, but to study the current use of exonyms in various forms of communication and in different parts of the world and to establish models and benchmarks;
- (d) Welcomed the continued efforts of the Working Group to organize workshops with a focus on the current WG agenda and to document the deliberations.



## **29/114**

Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Recognized that pronunciation-related studies have a relevant place in toponymy and need to be understood within the proper contexts and situations;
- (b) Took note of the report that provided a compelling explanation of how pronunciation impacts the work of other Working Groups;
- (c) Thanked the Working Group for its activities.

## **29/115**

Activities Relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

The Group of Experts:

- a) Took note of the reports submitted under this agenda item;
- (b) Noted the value of geographical names as keys to history and identity and the wide range of aspects presented on geographical names as cultural heritage;
- (c) Welcomed the Working Group's offer to collect examples of good naming practices for on-line guidelines regarding, for example, commemorative naming and the commercialization of geographical names;
- (d) Thanked the Working Group for its activities.

## **29/116**

Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors for international use

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Took note of the reports submitted under this agenda item and welcomed the recent updates to the inventory of toponymic guidelines as presented by the Coordinator;
- (b) Encouraged Member States that had not yet done so to prepare toponymic guidelines in accordance with resolution IV/4;
- (c) Requested Member States to regularly update existing toponymic guidelines.

**29/117**

Other toponymic issues

The Group of Experts:

- (a) Welcomed of the reports submitted under this agenda item;
- (b) Urged national standardization authorities to continue their critical work and to share their experiences in future sessions.