

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

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

Report of the Divisions

**Overview and synthesis of the information contained in the
Division reports submitted to the
Twenty-Ninth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names***

* Prepared for UNGEGN by Catherine Cheetham, United Kingdom

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

Overview and synthesis of the information contained in the
Division reports submitted to the
Twenty-Ninth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Submitted on behalf of UNGEGN, prepared by Catherine Cheetham (United Kingdom)

Introduction

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) includes 24 Divisions, each comprising representatives from countries with linguistic and/or geographical connections. Each Division is encouraged to submit a report on its activities to the UNGEGN Sessions.

This overview summarises the information contained in the 18 Divisional reports submitted under Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda of the 29th Session of UNGEGN: Reports of the Divisions. Papers consulted are listed in Annex A to this paper (this annex also includes acronyms and initialisms used in this paper). No submissions had been made by the remaining 6 Divisions at the time of writing (18th April 2016). The purpose of this synthesis is to limit the amount of time allocated to presentation during this agenda item; all papers are available for consultation at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnSession29.html>

Structure and content of Divisional reports

A variety of approaches towards the presentation of reports is evident among the Divisions. Some report by theme or UN Resolution (e.g. Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD)), others focus on joint meetings, regional activities and joint projects (e.g. Arabic), and a number describe attempts to establish contacts and encourage member participation (e.g. Africa Central; Africa South). Most Divisions have also included a summary of its member countries' national activities and outputs, detailed information about which has sometimes been submitted to this UNGEGN Session in dedicated Working Papers under other agenda items. In some cases, where a country is a member of more than one Division, an outline of its national activities has been included in all relevant Divisional reports.

A number of common topics have arisen from the reports (largely centred on UNGEGN Working Group themes) and these are described under Principal areas of work below.

Division composition and level of activity

The reports reveal the disparities between the Divisions in their size, structure, organisation and level of activity. The composition and chairing of the Division is described in most of the reports; a number describe positive efforts to re-engage nations affiliated to their Division who have not contributed recently (Africa Central, Romano-Hellenic).

Regional collaboration: Divisional meetings and joint projects

Some of the Divisions have organised meetings since the last session of UNGEGN (Arabic; Asia South-East (ASED); Baltic; DGSD; Norden; East Central and South-East Europe (ECSEED)). Many report on other opportunities to share information (e.g. USA-Canada, Francophone). It is clear that many Divisions are successfully holding meetings in conjunction with other related events whether they be Working Group meetings, toponymic training courses, UNGEGN sessions or other conferences with toponymic themes.

Particularly significant collaborative projects, either Divisional or otherwise multi-national, are:
The Arabic Division reports that the Division now has a permanent office in Amman, and that they are working towards the production of a standardized gazetteer, an Arab Atlas and establishing a database for Arabic geographical names.

ASED has established a Divisional map and gazetteer to be brought to the present UNGEGN Session. EENCAD describes its members' work on the Working Group on Geographical Names of the Council on Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Earth Remote Sensing of CIS State-members. The group compiles e-Bulletins, hosted on the *Rosreestr* website, recording name changes since 1990. EENCAD also reports on the Eurographics Association international data exchange project.

The Francophone Division describes the production of promotional material on the Division along with a bulletin and information-gathering across the Division. The Francophone Division (Niger) also describes collaboration with the ICJ on boundary delimitation.

There has been collaboration and information-sharing between the Slovenian Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names and Surveying and Mapping Authority and the Serbian Geodetic Administration.

The Portuguese-speaking Division describes the compilation of a list of country names and exonyms and a glossary in Portuguese.

A number of members report on their participation at the symposium "L'Onomastique dans le Monde Arabe et les Pays du Sahel" held in Constantine, February 2016.

The Baltic Division describes their participation in Czech-Polish-Slovak meetings on terminology used in the standardization of geographical names held in Warsaw, 2014 and Bratislava, 2015.

Principal areas of work:

National names standardization bodies and relevant legislation

Most reports provide an outline of national names authorities of the member countries of the Division, or describe the state authorities responsible for managing geographical names information. The legislation supporting such activities is also frequently detailed in the reports, and recent amendments specified. Several new names authorities are described as having been created since the last UNGEGN session: e.g. Africa South (Botswana: Geographical Names Interim Committee); Baltic (Lithuania); Romano-Hellenic (Romania: The Romanian Geographical Names Technical Commission); Africa Central (Democratic Republic of the Congo: la Laboratoire de Toponymie); Arabic (Saudi Arabia: National Committee of Geographical Names); ASED (Indonesia: The Indonesian Toponymy Community); Norden (Denmark: a restructure introducing the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency). In some instances, there is also an organisation dealing with names beyond the national boundaries, e.g. ECSEED (Poland); USA-Canada (USA).

Multi-lingual areas and minority names and languages

Work on and support for minority languages is mentioned in the reports of USA-Canada (Canada); EENCAD (Russia, Uzbekistan); ECSEED (Hungary, Poland, Slovenia); Baltic (Estonia, Poland, Russia); Romano-Hellenic (Spain) and UKD (United Kingdom); DGSD reports on collection of Slovene names in Carinthia (Austria) and of Frisian names in Fryslân (Netherlands), and also reports on participation at a symposium on minority toponyms in Slovenia. Norden Division describes the existence of transnational minorities across the region, and is considering addressing these at the Division level. Norden Division members also describe national projects on minority names (Finland, Norway, Sweden).

Support to international programmes

Work to support global or regional databases is described in a number of reports. In particular, reports summarise contributions to the EuroGeoNames programme e.g. Romano-Hellenic Division

(Cyprus, Italy). Continued work towards INSPIRE compliance (European standards of interoperability and compatibility of spatial data) is mentioned in many reports: Romano-Hellenic (Cyprus, Romania, Spain); DGSD (Germany); Baltic (Lithuania) and ECSEED (Slovenia). Work on the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) is described by USA-Canada (USA, Canada) and China Division (China). Work towards UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is reported by: Norden Division (Finland).

Toponymic training and promotion of geographical names

Further activities to promote the work of UNGEGN include a translation of the UNGEGN brochure and media kit into Portuguese, the UNGEGN glossary of terms into Polish, and a number of Wikipedia pages relating to UNGEGN and to the Romano-Hellenic Division into languages relevant to that Division. A number of reports, e.g. Africa Central (Chad), describe efforts to raise awareness of geographical names issues in the region. A planned Place Names Day is reported by UKD (Jamaica). The Baltic Division (Estonia) reports that the annual holding of a Place Names day in Estonia continues and describes the continual update of a training handbook to facilitate management of address data. The Francophone Division describes the formulation of a distance-learning toponymy training module, activities on the promotion of standardization amongst its members (Cameroon), and a training workshop held in Tunis, January 2015. Norden Division (Sweden) describes toponymic training for government authorities, and through the Geographical Names Network, training for Swedish official bodies on the use of foreign geographical names and for foreign users, information on Swedish geographical names. Norden Division (Sweden) also reports that a virtual-world Sweden has been incorporated into the computer game Minecraft, with the goal of encouraging young people to use geographical information.

The Romano-Hellenic Division (Cyprus) has produced a poster promoting the standardization of geographical names and distributed this to all high schools. The Latin America Division (Mexico) reports that a toponymic training course has been developed tailored to Mexico's requirements, based on the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) training course. USA-Canada describes activities raising awareness of geographical names issues through an anniversary celebration (USA) and the production of a commemorative map series and the archiving of historical documents (Canada). China Division (China) describes training materials and courses that have been prepared in support of its Second National Geographical Names Survey. DGSD report on their members' involvement as lecturers in toponymic training courses and also reports on their sponsorship of and work on the publication of the book series 'Name & Place', which has seen 3 volumes published since the 28th Session.

Cultural heritage and preservation of historical names

This topic is discussed with increasing frequency and features in reports from Romano-Hellenic (Spain), USA-Canada (Canada, USA); Arabic (Saudi Arabia); Norden (Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark); Africa South (South Africa) and China Division (China). Some Divisions report on name changes brought about by cultural and historical factors: USA-Canada (USA: the renaming of Mount McKinley to Denali) and ECSEED (Hungary: the renaming of Kajászó as Kajászószentpéter).

A number of Divisions report on members' involvement in the "Place names as intangible cultural heritage" meeting held in Florence, March 2015: USA-Canada (Canada); Romano-Hellenic (Cyprus, Italy, Spain), the Symposium "Place-names changes" held in Rome, November 2014: Africa Central and Francophone (Cameroon); Romano-Hellenic (Italy), the proceedings of which have been

published¹, and the symposium “Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage” held in Seoul, November 2014: Africa Central and Francophone (Cameroon); USA-Canada (Canada).

Production of toponymic material and related mapping programmes

New or amended Toponymic Guidelines are anticipated for members of the DGSD (Germany) and Norden (Finland).

Toponymic glossaries have been compiled by members of the ECSEED (Czech Republic), and the Portuguese-speaking Division.

The publication of topographic mapping and atlases is naturally linked to national geographical names work and is therefore described in many of the papers e.g. Latin America (Argentina: ‘Atlas Geográfico de la República Argentina’); ECSEED (Czech Republic, Hungary); EENCAD (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan (National Atlas of Kazakhstan and Great Atlas of History and Culture of Kazakhstan), Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan); Francophone (Burkina Faso and collaborative Division projects with France (IGN International working collaboratively with Burkina Faso, Mali and Benin)); UKD (Jamaica, United Kingdom); Arabic (Jordan, Qatar); Baltic (Lithuania ‘National Atlas of Lithuania’, Latvia, Russia) and Romano-Hellenic (Portugal). China Division (China) describes the progress of its Second National Geographical Names Survey. The question of addresses and street names is also included in a number of the reports. Baltic (Lithuania) describes the publication of a volume of a dictionary of Lithuanian place names and of a 5 volume dictionary of world place names; EENCAD (Kazakhstan) mentions the publication of dictionaries of geographical terms and folk geographical terms.

Toponymic databases, Gazetteers and National Data Infrastructures

These are perhaps the most common themes across the reports. The creation and updating of databases and gazetteers, or lists of standardized names, are reported by Africa Central (Cameroon); ECSEED (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine); ASED (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam); EENCAD (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan); Arabic Division (Egypt, Jordan, Oman, United Arab Emirates); China Division (China); Baltic (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia); Portuguese-speaking Division (Brazil); Latin America Division (Brazil, Spain); Francophone Division (Cameroon, Quebec); Romano-Hellenic (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain); USA-Canada (Canada, USA); UKD (United Kingdom); Norden Division (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark); Asia South-West (other than Arabic) (Iran) and DGSD (Germany, Switzerland).

Websites and portals

Both Divisional and national websites are described in many of the papers. The URLs provided in the Working Papers are drawn out in Annex B to this paper.

Exonyms, country names and pronunciation

Some divisional members describe drawing up lists of exonyms or national-language forms of names beyond state boundaries, and note that the UNGEGN WG Exonyms has met twice since the 28th Session (Hermagor, June 2014 and Zagreb, May 2015).

The collection and storage of country names are addressed by the Baltic Division (Poland); DGSD (Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland); ECSEED (Poland); EENCAD (Armenia); Francophone (France); Portuguese-speaking Division (Brazil) and UKD (United Kingdom).

Pronunciation is mentioned infrequently, but is referenced by DGSD (Germany, Netherlands).

¹ Place-Name Changes: *Proceedings of the Symposium in Rome, 17–18 November 2014*, eds Peter Jordan and Paul Woodman ISBN: 978-3-8300-8423-5

Writing systems

Writing systems and Romanization as part of national activities are described in a number of the reports, e.g. Arabic (Oman), EENCAD (Bulgaria, Ukraine), Asia South-West (other than Arabic) (Iran) and Baltic (Latvia, Russia). Other orthographical regulations are covered by the EENCAD (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan). ECSEED (Hungary) describes work on the correction of encoding in its data.

Maritime, undersea features and other

Maritime and undersea feature names are covered in national standardization activities reported by USA-Canada (Canada, USA) and China Division. The China Division also describes recent activities regarding lunar names. ASED (Indonesia) describes a platform facilitating crowdsourcing of geographical names.

Achievements

Divisions report progress over different areas; much new national legislation has been adopted in support of geographical names standardization and names are frequently being captured from topographic maps to populate geographical names catalogues or databases. International collaboration is exemplified by national support to the INSPIRE directive and the EuroGeoNames project.

Challenges

Geo-political instability has been noted as affecting the positive progress of some Divisions and engagement with certain members (e.g. Africa Central, Francophone). Africa Central (Cameroon) also notes the further difficulties in achieving standardization in highly multi-lingual environments. Africa South and the Portuguese-speaking Division report on the challenge to engage fellow members. The economic situation has affected many Division members whose funding for toponymic activities has been reduced e.g. USA-Canada (USA); Norden Division (Norway). ASED (Brunei) also notes that low public awareness can hamper standardization activities.

Conclusion

It is clear that a great deal of progress has been made in national standardization and collaborative regional projects, much of which can be attributed to Divisional communication and encouragement. The exchange of information is crucial, and Division members should be encouraged to share their toponymic data and publicise its availability. Consideration could be given as to how activity can be further encouraged and support offered to less active Divisions and non-participating members.

ANNEX A

List of documents submitted by UNGEGN Divisions under item 4 of the agenda:

- WP1 Rapport de la division francophone
- WP16 Report of the Baltic Division
- WP23 Africa South Division Report
- WP24 Report of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division (EENCAD)
- WP31 The Arabic Division of Experts on Geographical Names (ADEGN)
- WP32 Report of the Asia South East (ASED)
- WP34 Division de l'Afrique Centrale
- WP35 Report of the East Central and South-East Europe Division (ECSEED)
- WP36 Report of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD)
- WP41 Report of the United Kingdom Division (UKD)
- WP42 Report of the China Division
- WP47 Africa East Division Report (AED)
- WP49 Report of the Romano-Hellenic Division (RHD)
- WP52 Informe de la División de América Latina
- WP68 Report of the Portuguese-speaking Division
- WP69 Report of the USA-Canada Division
- WP77 Report of the Norden Division
- WP83 Report of Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)

ANNEX B

Divisional websites listed in Working Papers in Annex A

- WP1 Francophone Division: <http://www.toponymiefrancophone.org/divfranco/>
- WP16 Baltic Division: http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/bd_ru.htm
- WP31 Arabic Division: www.adegn.net
- WP35 East Central and South-East Europe Division <http://ecseed.zrc-sazu.si/Home.aspx>
- WP77 Norden Division <http://nordendivision.nfi.ku.dk/>

National websites listed in Working Papers in Annex A

Argentina: "Normas generales para el uso de abreviaturas en las publicaciones cartográficas" available from Instituto Geográfico Nacional: www.ign.gob.ar

Armenia: Approved names lists: www.arlis.am

Austria: Slovene names collection: www.flurnamen.at and www.ledinskaimena.si

Belarus: State catalogue of geographical names: www.maps.by

Brazil: Glossary of generic terms: http://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv88835_v2.pdf

Cyprus: Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names (CPCSGN): www.geonoma.gov.cy and INSPIRE geoportal of Cyprus: www.geoportal.gov.cy

Czech Republic: Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre <http://www.cuzk.cz>, including maps and databases at: <http://www.geoportal.cuzk.cz> and the Names of the World project at: <http://jmenasveta.cuzk.cz>

Denmark: Danmarks Stednavne geographical names application: <http://www.danmarksstednavne.navneforskning.ku.dk/>

Estonia: National Place Names Register: <http://xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik/knr/>

France: Commission nationale de toponymie: http://cnig.gouv.fr/?page_id=10578, including country and city names: http://cnig.gouv.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CNT-PVM_révisé_2016-01-29.pdf,

sovereign and dependent entities: http://cnig.gouv.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Entités_géopolitiques-souveraines-ou-dépendantes-2016-01-29.pdf and dictionary of geographical names: http://cnig.gouv.fr/?page_id=10564;

Patrimoine en partage project: <http://patrimoineenpartage.org/>

Germany: document on Minority and Regional Languages in Germany:

http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Broschueren/2015/Minderheiten_Minderheitensprachen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

Iran: Iranian National Geographical Names Database: <http://gndb.ncc.org.ir> and sample exonyms list: <http://217.218.133.169/sw>

Jamaica: National Land Agency: www.nla.gov.jm

Kazakhstan: State Catalogue of geographical names: www.til.gov.kz; Classifier of the world's countries: www.stat.gov.kz

Latvia: concise Geographical Names Database: <http://vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv>; National Address Register: <https://www.kadastrs.lv>; Map browser: <http://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/karte/>; Exonyms list: <http://www.vvc.gov.lv/advantagecms/LV/valstuunvalodunosaukumi/valstuunvalodunosaukumi.html>

Lithuania: Spatial Information portal www.geoportal.lt; Lithuanian Language Institute: <http://lvvgdb.lki.lt>; World Place Names: <http://pasaulio-vardai.vlkk.lt>; Address Register data: www.regia.lt

Netherlands: Dutch Language Union: http://taaladvies.net/taal/aardrijkskundige_namen/

Norway: Norsk Stadnamleksikon geographical names application: <http://www.norskstadnamleksikon.no/>

Poland: "List of Minority Place Names in Poland": http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/files/list_of_minority_names.pdf; "List of official names of localities and their parts": http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/official_names.php; "Names of countries, their capitals and inhabitants": <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wykaz.php>; Exonyms lists: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wpngs_en.php and <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/wpngs.php>; Geodetic and Cartographic Documentation Centre: <http://www.codgik.gov.pl/index.php/darmowe-dane/prng.html>; geoportal: www.geoportal.gov.pl; country names: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wykaz.php>

Russia: Legal acts relating to geographical names: <https://rosreestr.ru/site/activity/geodeziya-i-kartografiya/naimenovaniya-geograficheskikh-obektov/zakonodatelstvo-rf-o-naimenovaniyakh-geograficheskikh-obektov/>; State catalogue of geographical names: <https://rosreestr.ru/site/activity/geodeziya-i-kartografiya/naimenovaniya-geograficheskikh-obektov/gosudarstvennyy-katalog-geograficheskikh-nazvaniy/>; Bulletins recording name changes: https://rosreestr.ru/wps/portal/p/cc_ib_other_lines_activity/cc_ib_cartographical_activity/cc_ib_names_geographical_objects/cc_ib_works_names_geographical_objects; National Atlas available at: <https://rosreestr.ru/site>; romanization system: <https://rosreestr.ru/site/activity/geodeziya-i-kartografiya/naimenovaniya-geograficheskikh-obektov/zakonodatelstvo-rf-o-naimenovaniyakh-geograficheskikh-obektov/>

Slovenia: Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names: http://www.gu.gov.si/en/delovnapodrocja_gu/projekti_gu/slovene_governmental_commission_for_the_standardisation_of_geographical_names/#c17314

Spain: la Infraestructura de Datos Espaciales de España: www.ideo.es; Nomenclátor Geográfico de España: <http://centrodedescargas.cnig.es/CentroDescargas>

Sweden: Lantmateriet: www.lantmateriet.se and information on geographical information in Minecraft: <http://www.lantmateriet.se/en/Nyheter-pa-Lantmateriet/nu-slapper-lantmateriet-hela-sverige-i-minecraft/>

Ukraine: Bulletin of Verkhovna Rada: www.rada.gov.ua

United Kingdom: Ordnance Survey of Great Britain Names policy: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/policies/os-names-policy.pdf>; Ordnance Survey's Welsh names policy: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/policies/os-welsh-names-policy.pdf>; Ordnance Survey's Gaelic Names Policy: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/policies/ordnance-survey-gaelic-names-policy-in-english.pdf>; Permanent Committee on Geographical Names: www.gov.uk/pcgn; Foreign and Commonwealth Office <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>; Government Digital Service: <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/>; GDS country register <https://country.register.gov.uk/>

Other websites listed in Working Papers in Annex A

EuroGeoNames: <http://ec2-50-19-212-160.compute-1.amazonaws.com/EGNo1/> and <http://www.eurogeonames.com/refappl/>

INSPIRE: <http://www.europeandataportal.eu/> and <http://inspire-geoportal.ec.europa.eu/>

UNGEEN document translations:

[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEEN/docs/RESOLU%C3%87%C3%95ES%20ADOTADAS%20NAS%20DEZ%20CONFER%C3%84NCIAS%20DO%20UNGEEN trad.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEEN/docs/RESOLU%C3%87%C3%95ES%20ADOTADAS%20NAS%20DEZ%20CONFER%C3%84NCIAS%20DO%20UNGEEN%20trad.pdf)

http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/glossary_of_terms_PL.pdf