

**Ninth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

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Item 17(b) of the provisional agenda*

Toponymic education and practice and international cooperation:

Training courses on toponomy

Working Paper on Training

Submitted by Lebanon**

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WORKING PAPER ON TRAINING

(Submitted under item #17 of the Provisional Agenda E/CONF.98/1)

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Proposal on training course¹

Course overview

- a. Participants must be lecturers including international experts.
- b. Participants will be sought after from all member states. It is envisaged that they will predominantly be members of national mapping and names standardization bodies, sponsored by their employers.
- c. Duration is four weeks.
- d. Location must be defined by the organizing committee.
- e. Main features:

Sessions will be divided between lectures, group exercises, and the opportunity for hands-on experience of data processing. Fieldwork will be conducted in the surrounding region, and will encompass cultural as well as technical aspects of investigation. Centerpieces of the course will be regular meetings with the Geographical Names Board, which participants will attend as observers after a full briefing on the work of the board and the issues to be discussed.

¹ The contents of this paper is based on the proposal of the APIT (Asia Pacific Institute for Toponymy , Macquire university Australia).

Contents:

opening, welcome; functions of geographical names; social and economic benefits of standardization; UN activities in geographical names standardization national standardization; implementation of UN recommendations; setting up a national names authority (powers, membership, staff)
establishing standardization principles; international agreements; policies and rules for uniform decisions
specific national, regional and local requirements; implementation of standardization; procedures, methodologies and guidelines
techniques of toponymic fieldwork; coordinate systems and projections; description of the fieldwork area; linguistic issues in the fieldwork area; cultural issues in the fieldwork area
preparation of interview questions
travel to fieldwork area; overview of fieldwork area
interviews with local informants
Interviews with local informants (continued)
Office analysis of information gathered and manual data processing
Field review of information gathered; return from fieldwork area
computer-assisted data processing; terminology; hardware and software; database management systems; office processing (data verification and data loading)
briefing for meeting of Geographical Names Board
data retrieval requirements and techniques; maintenance issues; promulgation of data; maps and gazetteers
meeting of Geographical Names Board
automated processing workshop
review of Geographical Names Board meeting
toponymic guidelines; minority names; name placement on maps; name placement exercise
toponymic needs of private industry; toponymic evaluation of school atlases in the area
exonyms; writing systems; data availability on the Internet; cooperation within the region
course evaluation; award of certificates, close

Participants

Participants in the course must be from different Arabic countries.

All of the participants must be in the field of geographical names standardization in their respective countries – whether in government bodies (e.g. mapping and surveying agencies), or in academic institutions (e.g. university geography or linguistic departments). These perspectives are set in order to create interesting dialogue and exchange of ideas between participants.

Lecturers

The lecturers, and their respective fields of expertise, include scientists from departments of Natural Resources, lecturers in cartography, human geography, geo-information, toponymy, linguistics, phonetics...

Schedule

Week 1 – the theory of geographical names

Week 1 of the course will be a theoretical introduction to geographical names standardization. The content focuses on the principles and processes of:

- establishing national geographical names authorities (or efficient running of names authorities in the case of nations which already have fledgling authorities)
- creating official geographical names registers and
- Making these gazetteers publicly available.

Topics covered include the naming process; the role and function of geographical names; national agencies, models and procedures; languages; writing systems; maps, geodetic and cartographic reference systems; field collection systems; multilingual areas; legal status of names; office processing of names; script transformation systems; editorial issues; the role of the United Nations; exonyms; toponymic guidelines.

The scope of the course is only the handling of national geographical names but also issues encountered when dealing with geographical names on an international level. In the introductory sessions, and throughout the course, participants will be presented with ideas and principles rather than fixed rules and solutions. Participants will then have to consider how best to apply these suggestions and possibilities to the particular situation in their respective countries.

Week 2 – the practical component

The second week of the course comprises the practical component. Participants will have the opportunity to go out into the field, to practice the theory, and compare it with the, somewhat more challenging, reality of geographical names collection. This exercise will be done in small groups; each with an interpreter. Two days will be enough to be spent in a rural area and one day in a municipal area. Geographical names will be collected with the assistance of people and local responsible authorities of the area, who have liable information about places' names, their history, meanings, and local pronunciation. Collected names will be then, treated in the office, and used to build toponymic data files, which will be used to produce maps, and gazetteers.

This practical component can be conducted and done back home by each participant geographical names institution. However, an exercise at the end of the session for two days would be indispensable.

Place and date

Place and date would be proposed by the training working group of the Arab Division of Experts on Geographical Names (ADEGN) elected during the 3rd Arab Conference on Geographical Names (3rd ACGN) held in Beirut on the 30th and the 31st of May 2007.

UNGEGN Assistance

UNGEGN assistance would be appreciated