

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

New York, 21 - 30 August 2007

Item 7 of the provisional agenda\*

**Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the  
standardization of geographical names**

**Some suggestions for change for future Conferences and UNGEGN Sessions**

Submitted by the UNGEGN Chair \*\*

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\* E/CONF.98/1.

\*\* Prepared by Helen Kerfoot, UNGEGN Chair.

## **Some suggestions for change for future Conferences and UNGEGN Sessions**

The United Nations has recently focussed on “60 years – a time for renewal”. We should be considering this, too. For the standardization of geographical names 40 years have elapsed since the first Conference was held in Geneva and very nearly 60 since the first small group of experts was convened. Since these early days there have now been nine Conferences and 24 Sessions of UNGEGN.

During these years, much has been accomplished around the world in the standardization of geographical names, while from the standpoint of technology and communications the world has made vast changes over the past half century. We should be considering our road ahead, so that it is in harmony with these advances and their implementation. Approaches to meetings and conferences have changed, travel and accommodation costs have escalated, communication has become virtually instantaneous, and so on.

Following each UNGEGN Session and Conference in recent times we have sought your feedback and wherever possible tried to put into practice your suggestions for improvement. Then at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of UNGEGN in 2006, I submitted to experts WP 55 “Looking to the future” for both UNGEGN Sessions and the Conferences. Such matters had already been discussed at joint meetings of the UNGEGN Working Groups on Evaluation and Implementation, and on Publicity and Funding. Some of you provided feedback at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session, and these responses were reviewed at the next joint Working Group meeting earlier in 2007.

With the support of the UNGEGN Secretariat, I now put forward the following for consideration of the Conference:

### **(1) Length of the Tenth Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

*It is recommended that, in keeping with other events hosted by the United Nations, the next Conference be shortened slightly to cover six working days.*

### **(2) Agenda for the Tenth Conference and the 25<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN Session**

The agenda for the Ninth Conference covers many major issues relating to national and international standardization, social and economic benefits, and implementation of resolutions. However, the format is still generally based on the submission and presentation of documents against traditional agenda items.

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Prepared by Helen Kerfoot, UNGEGN Chair

During the past two UNGEGN sessions and for this Conference we have tried to include invited presentations of general interest to participants on various issues that face those involved with the administration of geographical names. We hope in this way to emphasize some of the challenges we face and some of the issues as seen by users of geographical names data.

This is the appropriate time to align the agendas of the next UNGEGN Session and the next Conference with current thinking of being issue-oriented, invoking discussion of best practices, inviting presentations on topics of general interest, involving users of names data, and learning of new developments around the world.

***It is proposed that an ad hoc committee be formed to review the current agendas during this Conference, and in keeping with changing perspectives to propose the next agendas, in time for discussion and acceptance later at this gathering.***

Now that documents can be put on the UNGEGN website for reading well ahead of the Conference, there may be some agenda items that are included in future meetings, but for which papers are not actually presented orally. There could be other agenda items where individuals are responsible for summaries of certain topics. There could be themes for certain days. Perhaps there should be some sessions run concurrently, or parts of some days should be designated for workshops. Such issues can be considered by our ad hoc committee. We do not necessarily have to completely reformat our approach to work, but at least should consider possible changes.

### **(3) Short workshops**

It is clear that training sessions associated with a Conference or UNGEGN Session have proved very valuable (as in Berlin 2002, Vienna 2006) and certainly it is hoped that such events can and will be held again.

In addition, exhibits and presentations as organized by Germany during the Eighth Conference in 2002, were appreciated by participants. On this occasion in New York, such extensive associated events are not possible. However, UNGEGN, with the help of the UN Cartography Section and the UN Statistics Division, has produced a small exhibit and has also arranged for experts to lead short lunchtime workshops, open to delegates who wish to participate.

***It is recommended that similar workshops be considered by the UNGEGN Bureau for future UNGEGN Sessions and perhaps for the afternoon of the UNGEGN Session that directly precedes the Tenth Conference.***

### **In conclusion**

While looking to make changes in keeping with the functioning of the world today, we are in no way trying to downgrade the work being undertaken and achievements made

by agencies and authorities in different countries. On the contrary, we are trying to put such work into perspective and to provide a stimulating learning experience for all who attend the Sessions and Conferences.