



**UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
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Inside this issue:

▪ Preface	
Message from the Chairperson	1
▪ News from the Headquarters	
From the Secretariat	2
▪ From the Divisions	
Arica West Division	3
▪ From the Working Groups	
Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation	8
Working Group on Terminology	8
Working Group on Pronunciation	9
▪ Publications	
New Toponymic literature	11
A World of Names	11
▪ Forthcoming Trainings	
Training Course in Mozambique	13
Training Course in Australia	14

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Impressum

UNGEEN Information Bulletin

(formerly
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Preface

Message from the Chairperson

Dear UNGEGN Experts

Already several months have passed since the 22nd Session of UNGEGN in April! I wish to thank the Vice-chairpersons, the Rapporteurs, and the Working Group Convenors and Rapporteurs for their extra efforts that helped so much with the smooth running and success of the Session. Several major initiatives were set in motion at that time, and we look forward to hearing more on activities relating to the Task Force on names standardization in Africa, the EuroGeoNames project, various other database and data standards activities, promotion of names used by indigenous and minority groups, geographical names as cultural heritage, liaison with user groups ... and so on.

Before the 23rd Session planned for early in 2006, I shall be working with the UNGEGN Secretariat staff on several important tasks. We have two manuals (basic and technical) to publish; the website to update; and the initial phases of a world

database of countries and populated places to put in place. In addition, there is the important issue of funding to support training, particularly for developing countries, as for example, in 2004 in Maputo (Mozambique) and Bathurst (Australia). Before 2006 we will evaluate, and where possible implement, your suggestions to enhance the work of UNGEGN at our slightly shorter 23rd Session.

During the rest of 2004 and 2005, I urge Division Chairs to foster concepts of geographical names standardization within their divisions, and to involve as much as possible those experts who were unable to be at the 22nd Session in New York. Working Group Convenors also have the challenge of maintaining the momentum of their work with members once again dispersed worldwide. Planning may be taking place for meetings of Divisions or Working Groups; please let the

UNGEGN Secretariat know of your plans in good time, so that this information may be made visible on the UNGEGN website.

Inevitably during the year, personnel change, addresses and e-mail contact points change. Please help the Secretariat by keeping them apprised of such changes, so that you and your colleagues may continue to receive the reports and information about forthcoming events, in a timely way!

I look forward to talking with many of you – at least through e-mail – in the coming months and wish you all the best of health, happiness and success until we reconvene.

Helen Kerfoot
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News from the Headquarters

From the Secretariat

Dear UNGEGN experts,

Nearly two months have passed since the 22nd session of UNGEGN in New York. Therefore, the current issue is understandably relatively light.

I would like to inform you that the report of the Secretary-General (a summary of findings and recommendations of the Session), to be presented for adoption by ECOSOC in its coming Substantive Session of 2004 in July, is already edited and published (GEGN/22/1). The general report of the 22nd session of UNGEGN (GEGN/22 and GEGN/22/INF/1) is already completed and will be edited and published soonest. A copy of this report, attached to the Secretary-General report, will be mailed to each of you in the next few weeks. In addition, an electronic copy of the two reports will be made available on our website

(<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/>).

As mentioned by Ms Kerfoot, UN is supporting two training courses in Mozambique (September 2004) and Australia (October 2004) (see forthcoming trainings).

As all of you know, it's likely that the next session of UNGEGN will take place in Vienna as recommended by the 22nd Session.

I look forward to working with you and, hopefully, to seeing you in Vienna and meeting with you during the 23rd session of UNGEGN.

Happy and nice summer vacation.

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From the Divisions

Africa West Division

Standardization of Geographical Names in West African Countries



Figure 1: Official languages spoken in West African countries

Abstract

spurs man to name geographical confusion. To forestall any confusion, Countries in West Africa (WA) are features and places. The need for geographical names in WA ought to be mainly categorized into two, that is, unambiguous identification and location of geographical entities and places is worldwide. In furtherance of the goal of such compartmentalization of the region is a relict of colonization. WA service organisations in the protection of West Africa, an attempt was made to establish the Africa West Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). The progress achieved so far as well as the challenges facing the Africa West Division is discussed in this paper.

Introduction

Countries in WA are mainly categorized into two, that is, Anglophone and Francophone, with such compartmentalization of the region being a relict of colonization. Influence of this compartmentalization on relationships between countries is quite visible as ties fostered along colonial lines are much stronger than proximity ties. Anglophone WA countries are Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia. Francophone WA countries are Togo, Benin, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Coté d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali and Niger, while Liberia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde were formerly under the Americans, Portuguese and Spanish respectively. Figure 1 shows the official languages spoken in each WA country.

West Africa is a multilingual region having hundreds of pure languages being spoken in the different countries aside from the official languages spoken. Of these languages, few like Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba are spoken across different countries (see table 1). Hausa is spoken in Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad).

Yoruba is spoken extensively in southwestern Nigeria and along the West African coast in parts of Benin, Sierra Leone, Coté d'Ivoire, Liberia and Ghana. Other languages occur only within given localities. The multiplicity of languages can be better appreciated by using

Nigeria as an illustration. Nigeria conservatively has over 400 pure languages. Taking just one of these pure languages, Yoruba for an example, there exist about 300 dialects of the Yoruba language.

The multilingual nature of WA has consequences on geographical names in the region. Using Nigerian examples, instances abound of the following in WA:

- A place having more than one name (e.g Lagos, Eko);
- Place names are duplicated, even in the same localities (Ikoyi in Lagos, Ikoyi in Ile-Ife, Ikoyi near Ikire, Ikoyi in Akure, Ikoyi north of Ogbomoso, Ikoyi-Ile near Iwo);
- Place names having the same spelling but different pronunciation and meaning (Arigidi in Ekiti, Arigidi in Akoko);
- Place names having variant spellings.

In Yoruba speaking parts, names like Mokola, Ajegunle, Pako, Surulere are commonly occurring names. Seeing that such situations could lead to misunderstanding and confusion, geographical names in WA ought to be standardised as it is being done worldwide. Still prominent among the purposes for the collection of geographical names in most WA countries is the use of place names on maps, especially on topographic map series. Most countries have not gone beyond the collection of place names for the preparation of mapping gazetteers. Names contained in such map gazetteers

are limited in their collection to only those names that would appear on maps of certain scales. Therefore there is the possibility of non-inclusion of many important names; places with historic importance, for example, could be omitted from such gazetteers if it fails to fall within the scope of the map to be produced.

It is important to standardise geographical names for the purpose of affirming a country's cultural/historical heritage and national identity. It is also necessary for the purposes of trade and commerce, transportation, communication, regional and environmental planning, science and technology, successful conduction of elections and censuses, provision of social services, tourism, disaster management, search and rescue operations, etc. (SABNC, 2002).

Establishing the Africa West Division

Africa West Division (AWD) is one of the many linguistic and geographical divisions supporting the work of UNGEGN. Other divisions operating within Africa include Africa Central Division, Africa East Division, Africa South Division and the Arabic Division. The AWD is meant to provide a closer interface to WA nations to help to develop procedures and mechanisms for standardization in response to national needs. It is to develop programs of training and particularly to assist countries which have not developed

systems for the maintenance of consistent place names.

In furtherance of the effort at standardizing geographical names in WA, a formal attempt at establishing the AWD was made at the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) held in Berlin, Germany in 2002. Prior to the conference some countries in WA have had representations in earlier conferences. At the 8th conference only Nigeria, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire had a participant each with the Nigerian and Guinean participating as trainees of the Toponymy course organised by the Dutch and German speaking division. At a meeting of all participants from WA held at the Berlin conference, the Nigerian and Guinean were chosen as the Chair and Secretary of the AWD respectively.

Status of Geographical Names Standardization in West Africa

The first assignment embarked upon by the AWD was to know the status quo of geographical names standardization in countries of the region. Having compiled the addresses of authorities likely handling names in the different WA countries, letters were sent out both in French and English. Further discussion in this section will be limited to Nigeria for which there is first hand information presently.

The collection, storage and dissemination of geographical names in Nigeria have since been

handled by the Federal Surveys Department (Nigerian National Mapping Organisation) after the colonial era in 1960. Names are solely collected for the main purpose of topographic mapping at different scales. The local government authorities handle the naming of features under their jurisdiction like streets, parks, cemeteries etc.

In Nigeria, there is yet to be a national names authority. However, with Nigeria's participation in as many as UNCSGN, there are concise efforts underway to establish a national names authority. Geographical name is to be seen as a fundamental dataset of the National Geospatial Data Infrastructure (NGDI). Presently, the draft of the Nigerian National Policy on Geospatial Information prepared by a National Committee inaugurated by the Hon. Minister of Science and Technology is awaiting approval by the Federal Executive Council. Once this is approved, a workgroup on geographical names will have to be set up to work out modalities and give recommendation that would eventually lead to setting up a statutory body to be responsible for standardizing geographical names in Nigeria.

Associating Geographical Names with other Programmes in West Africa

There are many programmes in WA to which the standardization of geographical names can be associated for the effort to progress better and

further. The need to affirm each country's national identity and cultural/historical heritages seems most important than any other area. Other programmes are trade and commerce as well as tourism. This underscores the fact that WA as a region is a beehive of cultures and houses many cultural heritages like the Igbo-Ukwu and Benin culture (see Figures 2a and 2b).

The Igbo-Ukwu civilization of the 9th and 10th centuries is represented by intricately decorated bronze vessels and ornaments made by the cire perdue or lost wax method. The style of the art is most unusual. In fact, it is unique in the corpus of African art. The Benin culture dates back to the 15th to 19th centuries and present the most numerous sculptures in bronze and ivory in the whole of Black Africa (FMCT, Undated).

The collection and preservation of place and feature names as well as their variants overtime is crucial. This is because these names retain much of our culture, memory and heritage. Place names are often an important contributor to historical information (Parker, 2001).

Some Bottlenecks Evident in the West African Region

There are many bottlenecks to grapple with in the WA region. Although these bottlenecks are general problems to all sectors, they may have direct negative impact on the handling of geographical names, particularly,

its standardization. These are as follows:

Very poor communication system

Telephones were non-existent in many settlements across WA until the advent of the mobile phone which is a phenomenon of this new millennium. Until recently, when letters are sent by post from an Anglophone WA country (say, Nigeria) to a neighbouring Francophone WA country (say, Niger), a typical scenario would be for the letter to first get to France before arriving Niger. Thus, the letter would take a longer time than usual to get delivered, although the two countries are neighbours sharing a common boundary.

The languages

The official languages adopted in each WA country are those languages of the erstwhile colonialists, which have both their advantages and disadvantages. It is advantageous to adopt the language of the erstwhile colonialist as the official language of the country because that is the only language spoken across board by the educated ones in the country. Each WA country is linguistically heterogeneous, thus making this singular experience of colonisation the only unifying factor for all the different tribes and diversities of languages co-existing in each country. One of the disadvantages of these adopted foreign languages as official languages in WA countries is the imposition of a

foreign culture on the country. It puts an undue pressure on the country to maintain its ties with its erstwhile colonial powers. The educational systems, institutions and lifestyle in different WA countries reflect these foreign cultures. This situation hasn't been helpful in hastening the process of integration, an effort that is very necessary in order to achieve standardized geographical names in WA countries.

Ripping apart of a single tribe among West African countries

As earlier pointed out, the same language may be spoken in an average of five countries thereby cutting the same tribe across international boundaries between WA countries. Moreover, individual identity and filial relationships are ultimately sought and established along tribal lines, thus tribal identity and loyalty often take pre-eminence over national loyalty. Good examples are the Yoruba and Hausa languages which are spoken both within and between some WA countries (see Table 1). This makes socio-cultural integration of WA imperative and success at this will aid the understanding of the use of geographical names in WA and consequently its standardization.

Conclusion

As at today no significant stride has been achieved as regards the standardization of geographical names in West Africa. The overall effort can be enhanced by the creation of

necessary awareness from the government down to the people. Such awareness can be in form of training of manpower to handle geographical names. A naming system for WA can be worked out which should take into cognizance the operations of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS). Working of the AWD with the ECOWAS is very essential as ECOWAS is the regional body managing the wider system to which all the WA countries belong.

The need to standardize geographical names in WA is quite obvious and it is a challenging effort. The process calls for policy measures that will first of all lead to the creation of statutory naming authorities in each country. This would provide the institutional framework needed to support the standardization effort.

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Table 1: Some pure languages occurring in more than one West African Country

Language/Culture	Countries in which language is spoken
Fulani	Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria
Peul	Nigeria, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Benin, Senegal
Yoruba	Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana and Coté d'Ivoire
Tukolor	Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Mauritania and Mali
Hausa	Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso
Malinke	Coté d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gambia
Madinka	Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea
Mande	Burkina Faso, Mali, Sierra Leone
Wolof	Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania
Mossi	Burkina Faso, Ghana
Gourma	Burkina Faso, Togo
Fongbe	Benin, Togo
Susu	Sierra Leone, Guinea
Aja gbe	Togo, Benin
Dan	Liberia, Coté d'Ivoire
Tamachek	Niger, Mali

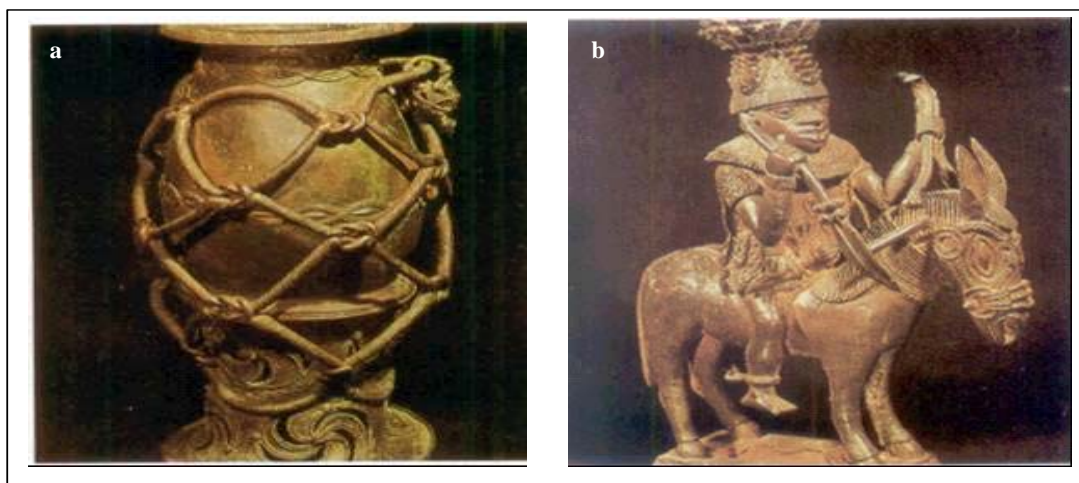


Figure 2 (a): Igbo Ukwu bronze pot with a stand roped together **(b)** Benin bronze equestrian figure respectively (Source: FMCT, Undated)

From the Working Groups

Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

The UNGEGN Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation aims to achieve better operations through an evaluation of the functioning and efficacy of UNGEGN and the implementation of resolutions, finding ways to involve member states not currently participating in UNGEGN, and looking at the needs of developing countries to achieve national standardization of their geographical names. At

the 22nd session of UNGEGN, the Working Group made progress in various aspects of these issues through evaluation of the Eighth Conference in Berlin (2002) and reporting on the activities initiated at the meeting of the Working Group in Seoul in December 2003.

During the 22nd UNGEGN session, the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation and the Working Group on

Publicity and Funding met together informally, and agreed to organize a joint meeting in Seoul (or other venue) in 2005.

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Working Group on Terminology

Meetings of the Working Group on Terminology are of two kinds; there are “closed” meetings attended by the registered members of the group, as against “open” meetings within sessions of UNGEGN. At the 22nd session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held in New York in April 2004, an “open” meeting was held as usual by the Working Group. Since the convenor remarked on the encouraging apparent “rejuvenation” of UNGEGN

and the attendance of experts from countries which, in the past, had not taken part in the conferences and sessions, he presented a brief review of the activity of the working group, briefly repeated below.

The working group was installed officially by the sixth U.N. Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992. Its main task has been the compiling and editing of a multilingual glossary of toponymic terminology, with the

convenor as chief editor. After some 8 years of work by many experts and, at a later stage, translators – who all contributed their expertise and time on a voluntary basis – the work was finally approved for publication by the 20th session of UNGEGN and printed by the United Nations in 2002 under the title “Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names” (U.N. publication sales No. M.01.XVII.7). Its 375 terms appear in all six official

languages of the U.N. – English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. Copies of this useful work can be obtained via the UNGEGN secretariat. Further translations have been made into German, Polish, Slovenian and lately into Japanese.

Resolution 3 of the 8th Conference recommended in 2002 that the working group continue to function with the aim of “reviewing the glossary periodically and updating it as required”. Accordingly, since the 8th Conference a number of new terms were proposed for inclusion in the Glossary and these were discussed at the 22nd session of UNGEGN in 2004, as follows:

- authorized name – see name, official.
- standard name – see name, standardized.
- geonym – see name, geographical.
- geoname – informal alternative for geographical name.
- transboundary name – name of a geographical feature

extending over two or more political entities.

ethnonym – in the definition of term No. 079, eponym, the last sentence should read as follows: The corresponding term in French is ethnonym which, however, is applied only to a group of persons.

The following terms were proposed, but no final decision as to their definition has been reached:

- univocity
 - nominative form (of a toponym)
 - recycled toponym
 - corrupted toponym
 - anecdotal toponym
 - commemorative toponym.
- The last two terms were discussed by the working group at its meeting in 2002, but the experts present there did not consider this splitting of the term toponym necessary.

Two further terms which were proposed already in 2002 without definitions were:

oikonym
anoikonym.
After the 22nd session of UNGEGN, in May 2004, a detailed note on these two terms was supplied by Dr. Milan Harvalik (Czech Republic), and this will be presented to the next meeting of the working group.

Finally, a proposal for new definitions of the two “problematic” terms
endonym
exonym
were received from Mr. Paul Woodman (United Kingdom). However, it is suggested that these definitions be discussed by the working group on terminology after their having been confirmed by the new working group on exonyms.

The next meeting of the working group on terminology will be held during the 23rd session of UNGEGN.

Naftali Kadmon
Convenor, UNGEGN Working Group on Terminology

Working Group on Pronunciation

Receiver language-specific pronunciation tables for geographical names

After the United Nations Standardization of Geographical Names had, in the past, rather vaguely indicated the need for Conferences on the Names had, in the past, rather dealing with the pronunciation

of geographical names, the 8th U.N. Conference held in Berlin in 2002 set up, in resolution No. 11, a new working group on pronunciation. No specific terms of reference were provided, the resolution only stating rather generally that a working group on pronunciation be established. A more detailed proposal was presented by Israel in conference paper E/Conf.94/CRP.89. This paper, worded in somewhat technical and mathematical terms, stated that rules for the pronunciation of geographical names in any donor language must be receiver language-specific. In other words, the rules for pronouncing names of geographical features originating in language A will be different for readers of language B from the rules for readers of language C. Since the total number of such pronunciation tables would therefore be very high (roughly n donor languages times m receiver languages), it was – and still is – suggested that the

working group start with preparing and assembling (n) pronunciation tables for readers of English. At a later stage, pronunciation tables serving readers of the other two working languages of the UNGEGN, and perhaps others, might be prepared.

In the period between 2002 and 2004 only two papers concerning pronunciation were prepared and submitted to the 22nd session of UNGEGN and to the working group. One of these, working paper No. 2, presented the rules of pronunciation of Hebrew geographical names for readers of English; it might perhaps serve as a template or model for others. The second paper, W.P. No. 1, also by Israel and named “The need for pronunciation guides for geographical names – steps towards a solution” presented the “why and how”; the theory on the one hand and the practical approach on the other.

Prospective producers of pronunciation tables are reminded that the sounds of one language can be represented by the script of another only approximately. Therefore one can only strive for the ideal reproduction of sounds, but hardly ever achieve it. Let this not deter us; not in vain has it been said that “the best is the enemy of the good”. Pronunciation rules should be brief, compact, uncluttered by diacritical signs as far as possible and clearly understood by the reader. They should be accompanied by practical examples.

It is hoped that at the next session of UNGEGN further divisions/countries will submit pronunciation tables for their geographical names

Naftali Kadmon

Convenor, UNGEGN Working Group on Terminology

Publications

New toponymic literature

The textbook "Toponymy – the Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names" by Naftali Kadmon (Vantage Press Inc., New York, 2001, ISBN 0-533-13531-1) has recently been translated into Japanese.

In 2002 the Geographical Survey Institute (GSI) of Japan, the national mapping organization of this country, asked the Japan Map Center (JMC) of Tokyo to translate "Toponymy" into Japanese, as Mr. Seiichi Tanioka, Director of the Topographic Department of the GSI, found it to be a suitable textbook for his staff. The GSI therefore asked the Japan Map Center to translate the book into Japanese. After receiving the requisite permission from the copyright holder the task of performing the translation was undertaken by Mr. Nobuo Nagai, Director of Research of the Japan Map Center. Within several months the translation was effected, and

within exactly one year the complete book appeared in print.

The Japanese edition of "Toponymy", produced by the Japan Map Center and printed on quality paper, conforms in every way to the original English version, including the multicolor cover. It includes 18 chapters, arranged in five main parts, with 34 illustrations, 317 notes on source material, and the complete "Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names." Its physical dimensions are slightly smaller than those of the original and the number of pages is 386, as against the former's 330. The Japanese edition was printed in 2000 copies, to be sold at 3,300 Japanese Yen (plus 5% Sales Tax).

The author of the original work was unable to proof-read the Japanese version of the book,

but noted the quality of the translation by checking the precision of the reproduction of all non-Japanese script – Aramaic, Arabic, Hebrew, Roman, Cyrillic, Greek, Persian, Thai, Inuktitut and others. This proved to be very good, and is demonstrated e.g. by the proper inclusion of all diacritics.

The Japanese edition of "Toponymy" is a valuable addition to toponymic training material. Moreover, there exists now a Japanese version of the United Nations "Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names".

The Japan Map Center is to be congratulated on both the quality and the speed with which this volume has been produced.

Naftali Kadmon

Convenor, UNGEGN Working Group on Terminology

The Names Society of Southern Africa (NSA)

A World of Names

An important publication, promoting the work of the

UNGEEN, is A World of Names (2 volumes). Edited by

Dr Lucie A. Möller and Professor J.U. Jacobs, this is a

special issue of *Nomina Africana*, journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa (NSA), compiled in honour of Dr Peter Edmund Raper, President of the NSA and former chairman of UNGEGN.

Volume 1 contains some 24 articles by the UNGEGN Secretariat, UNGEGN experts and scholars. These deal with the UNGEGN and aspects of geographical name standardization, including national standardization, exonyms, legislation, names transfer, training and education, translation, etymology, toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, reference systems, etc., and describes the status of standardization in a variety of countries, such as Canada, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia and New Zealand.

Volume 2 comprises articles mainly by South Africans and on South African names, not only geographical names, but personal names, acronyms, brand names, names from ancient Greece and Rome, etc., and not only from South African languages, but from Hindi, Tamil and Telegu, Lozi, etc.

This is an unique collection of useful and valuable articles by some of the world's leading experts and academics. The publication provides theoretical, practical and technical guidance for academics, cartographers, researchers, names officials and practitioners, and everyone interested in names. It will promote the UNGEGN and the standardization of geographical names, and will be a useful adjunct to education and training on names, and particularly

UNGEGN training courses. It is an excellent survey of names and naming on a global basis, and provides insights into many aspects of names.

Dr Lucie Möller has been an UNGEGN expert since 1996, and was Secretary and Treasurer of the Names Society of Southern Africa from 1989 to 2004. She has arranged and co-presented seven UN training courses on geographical names in southern Africa. Professor Johan U. Jacobs was Vice-President of the Names Society of Southern Africa and is Professor in English at the University of Natal in Durban. *A World of Names* is available at US\$30-00 per volume from:

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Forthcoming Trainings

Training Course in Toponymy

Maputo - Mozambique, 13-24 September 2004

A UN-supported Training Course in Toponymy will take place from 13 to 24 September 2004 at the National Directorate of Geography and Cadastre in Maputo – Mozambique. The Course, concerned with the standardization and administration of Geographical Names, will be offered in English.

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Training Course in Toponymy to be held in Australia

Another UN-supported Training Course in Toponymy will be held from 12 to 24 October 2004 at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, organised jointly by the Asia-Pacific Institute for Toponymy at

Macquarie University, Sydney and the New South Wales Geographical Names Board.

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