United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

- why, what, how and relevance to GGIM

Helen Kerfoot
UNGEGN Chair
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2011
Geographical names in every day life

- We name our surroundings for many reasons
  - e.g. reference, sense of belonging

- Geographical names/place names/toponyms
  - buildings, farms, streets
  - land, hydrographic, constructed features
  - offshore – maritime and seafloor features
  - (beyond Earth)

- Benefits if names written in agreed way
  - as ‘standardized’ by an authority
  - benefits: technical, economic, social, cultural
Lack of standardized data ...

- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
  - Earthquake in Pakistan, 2005
    - problem of delays in providing assistance to remote villages
    - difficult to obtain - standardized names, coordinates of villages, gazetteers, population statistics, maps
United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGGN)

- 1955 … Resolution of First Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific
- 1959 … ECOSOC Resolution 715 (XXVII)
- 1960 … First UN Experts Group meeting, New York
- 1967 … First UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Geneva
UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN)

UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

Country Names
Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers
Publicity and Funding
Toponymic Terminology
Romanization Systems
Training Courses in Toponymy
Evaluation & Implementation
Exonyms
Pronunciation
Indigenous/Minority/Regional Names

UNGE GN Secretariat (UN Statistics Division)

UNGE GN liaison with scientific groups

Divisions
23 linguistic/geographical divisions

Task Team for Africa
Toponymic Guidelines Coordinator

UNGE GN Bureau
UNEGGN aims

- See national names authorities created
  - backed by legislation
    - respect local usage of names
    - collect, store and disseminate authorized names
      - for government and public use
- Develop single scientifically-based systems of romanization
- Today - encourage multi-national datasets
What is important?
Urban growth – greater name demands

China (Dai, 2006)

The World (You, 2009)

- Urban dwellers (UN data)
  - 37% 1970
  - 50% 2008
  - over 80% 2030

20,000 new urban names each year

Ongoing training needed to administer
Geographical names pivotal role
UNGE GN website
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/
UNstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNEGGN

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