2006

# National agencies and …
# Role of the United Nations

## Helen Kerfoot

UNGEGN
(Natural Resources Canada)

# Names and our expectations

- Communication
  - Verbal and written in our own language
- Preservation
  - Aspect of our history and culture
- Technical reference
  - Clear use on maps, timetables, etc.

  ➢ *Accurate / current*

  *(authoritative / reliable)*

Kyev Kiev Kyiv Kyyev

Sidney Sydney

Helsinki

New Zealand Aotearoa

?

Mumbai Bombay

Montréal Montreal

Αθήνα Athens

Athenai Athína

Cape Town Le Cap

Kaapstad Kapstadt

Ekapa Kapkaupunki

eKapa

Uluru

/ Ayers Rock

Helsingfors

# Who decides on names?

- Friends and family

  - Local community

- Province / state

  - National level

    - International level
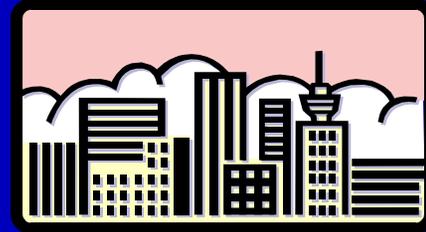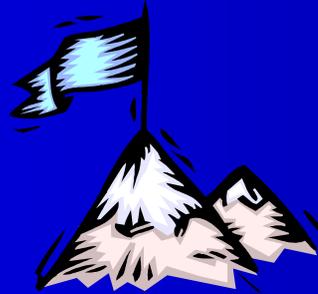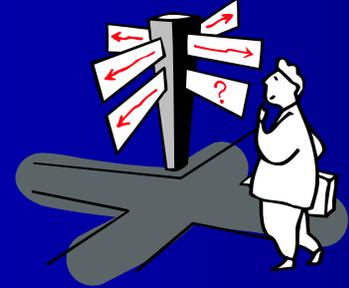
# Names authorities come in different shapes and sizes

- Default if no names board?
- Centralized national names board
    - all decisions under one roof
    - by sub-committees: feature types, language ..
- Decentralized to regional names boards
    - with central umbrella coordinating authority

  - *Is it a board, a council .....?*

# Standardization –
# central agency  / agencies

Municipalities

National
Hydrographic
Office

Military
Mapping

**National
Mapping Agency**

# Is this good or bad ?

- ✓ Expertise in mapping
- ✓ Collect names while doing field survey
- ✓ Continuing user of names
- ✓ Have available finances

- x Perhaps responsibility of one individual
- x Lack of range of expertise
- x Have own agenda
- x No shield from political pressure

# Standardization –
# names authority (centralized)

Office

National
Names Authority
(centralized)

branch offices    sub-committees    advisors
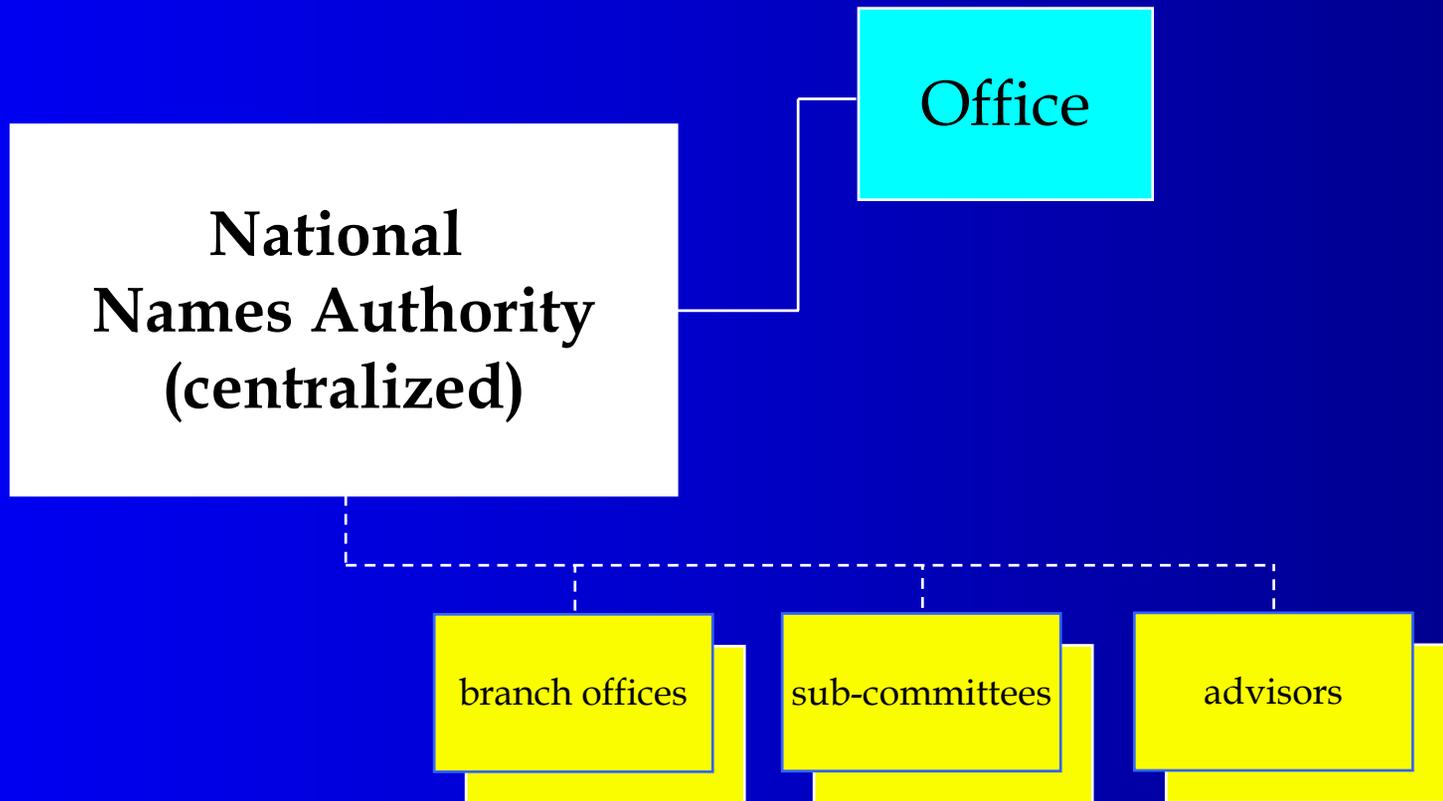
# Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names



*Responsibility* - **Under Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development**

*Legal basis* - **Decree 1989 and 1992**

*Decisions* **– physical and transport features**

*Advice* **– administrative names; treatment of names outside Hungary**

*Members* **– national mapping, departments of both domestic and foreign affairs; transport; geographical science, education and higher learning; experts in linguistics; local authorities, minorities; major map publishers; national press**

*Meetings* **– 3 to 5 times a year**

# Standardization –
# names authority (decentralized)

office — Regional committee

Office

Regional committee — office

National
Names Authority
(decentralized)

office — Regional committee

Regional committee — office
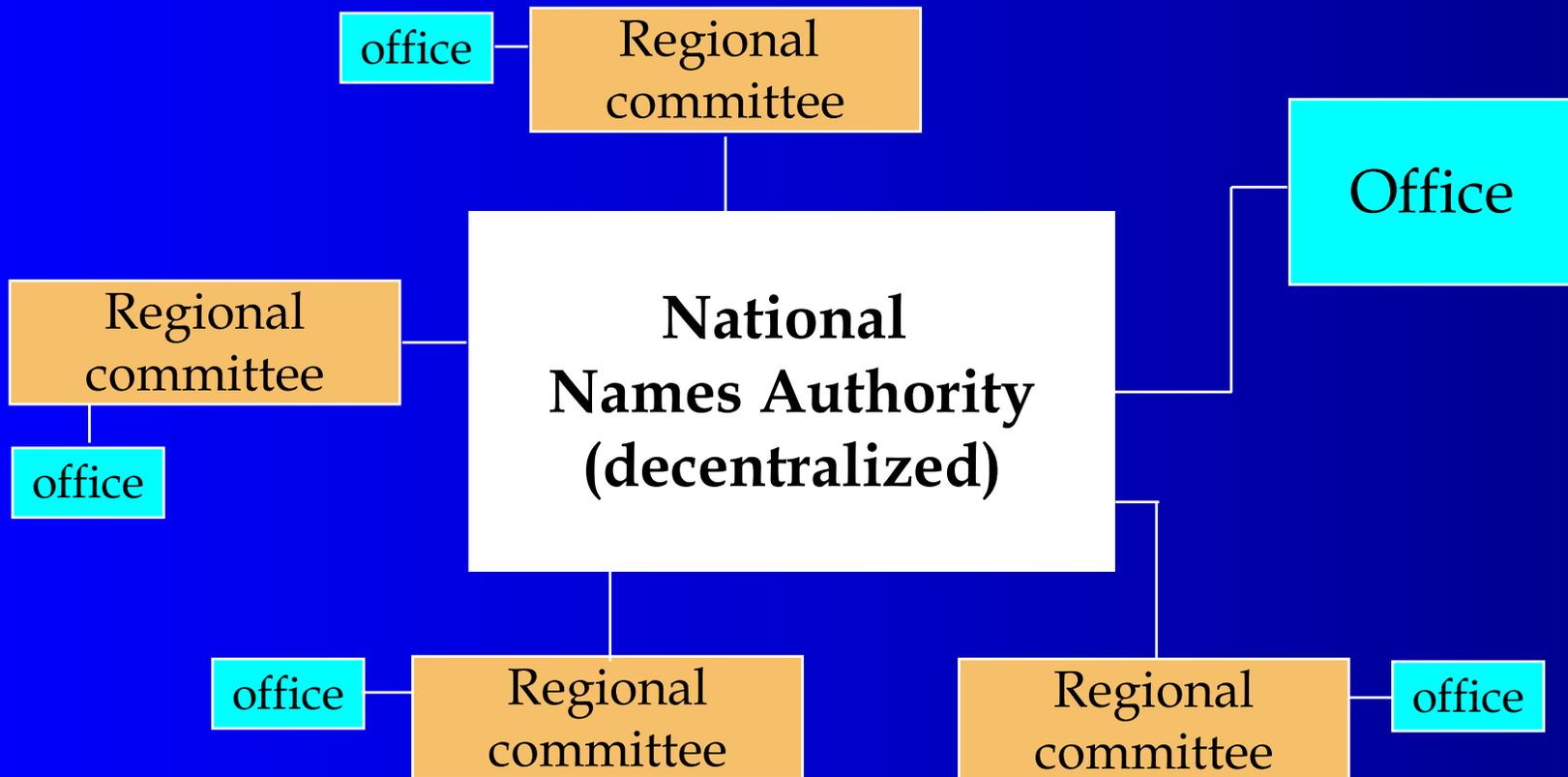
# Geographical names - Canada

## Administrative structure

```
                    ┌────────────────────────────────────┐
        ┌───────┐   │  Geographical Names Board of Canada │   ┌───────┐
        │ Chair │───│         (national authority)        │───│ Sec.  │
        └───────┘   │                                      │   └───────┘
                    │           ... since 1897 ...          │
                    └────────────────────────────────────┘
```

| 10<br>provinces | 3<br>territories | 11<br>federal depart. | (2)<br>Adv. com. chairs |
|---|---|---|---|
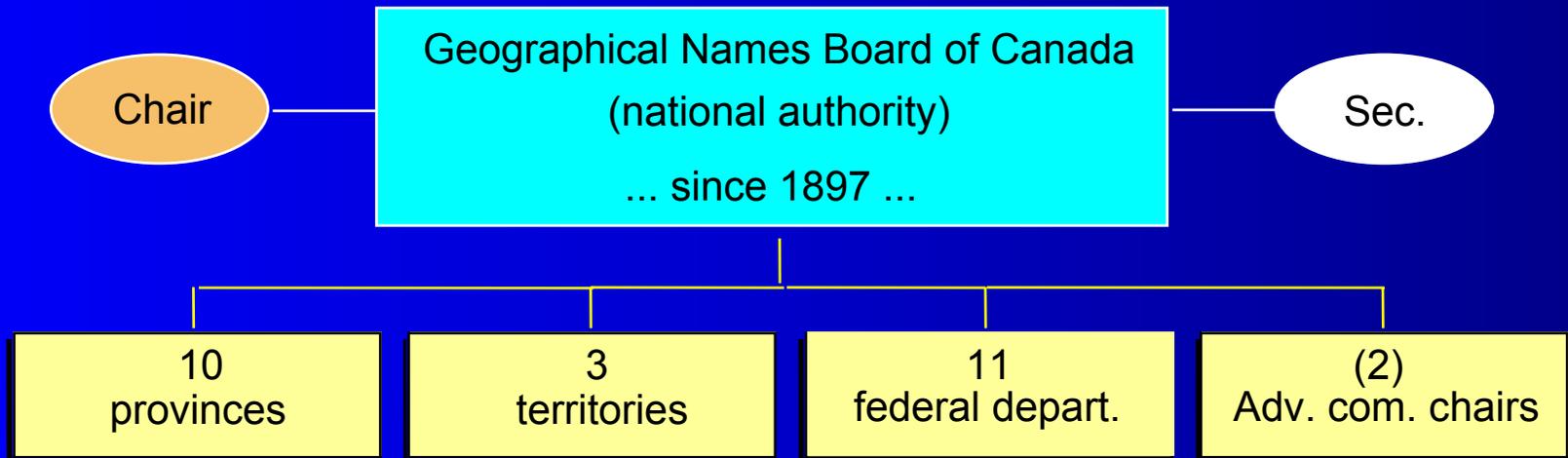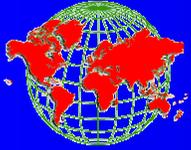
# GNBC …

- √ Forum for discussion
- √ Development of policies
- √ International, United Nations activities
- √ Receive advice on toponymic problems
- √ Work on common projects
- X .. Name decisions

# Provincial and territorial names authorities

- Some have administrative structures
- Some have names boards

**Public appointees**

- academia
- First Nations
- Northern Ontario
- francophone rep.

**Ex officio**

**Ministry of Natural Resources**

*YT*

*NU*

*AB*

*SK*

*ON*

*QC*

*NL*

*ONTARIO*

*Advisory to Minister*

OGNB

Chair

# Process ...........



- Field collection from local use



- Processing in office
  - to database, etc.

- **Official recognition**

- Dissemination

1987
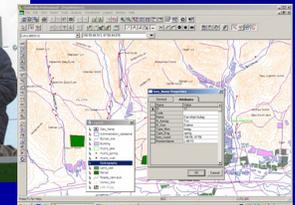
# In general …
# Board meeting results …

# About a board: tasks?

- Responsibilities and scope of decisions?
- Developing policies and guidelines to support names approval or rejection
- Making decisions/recommendations on names
- Assuring minutes, names decisions ... are made generally available
- Other activities?

… one name, or more?

# More on the Board

- Established by law, act, etc.
- Mandate, responsibilities of members, chair, secretariat
- Board looked to for unbiased judgement
- Decisions are important to future generations
- Integrity and effectiveness of board at stake
- Slow and sure!
- ..... political interference

**Core Geographical Names Activities**

- Outreach to international community
- Dissemination
- Policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, decisions
- National Toponymic Services
- Tools, Training
- Field recording & investigation delineation
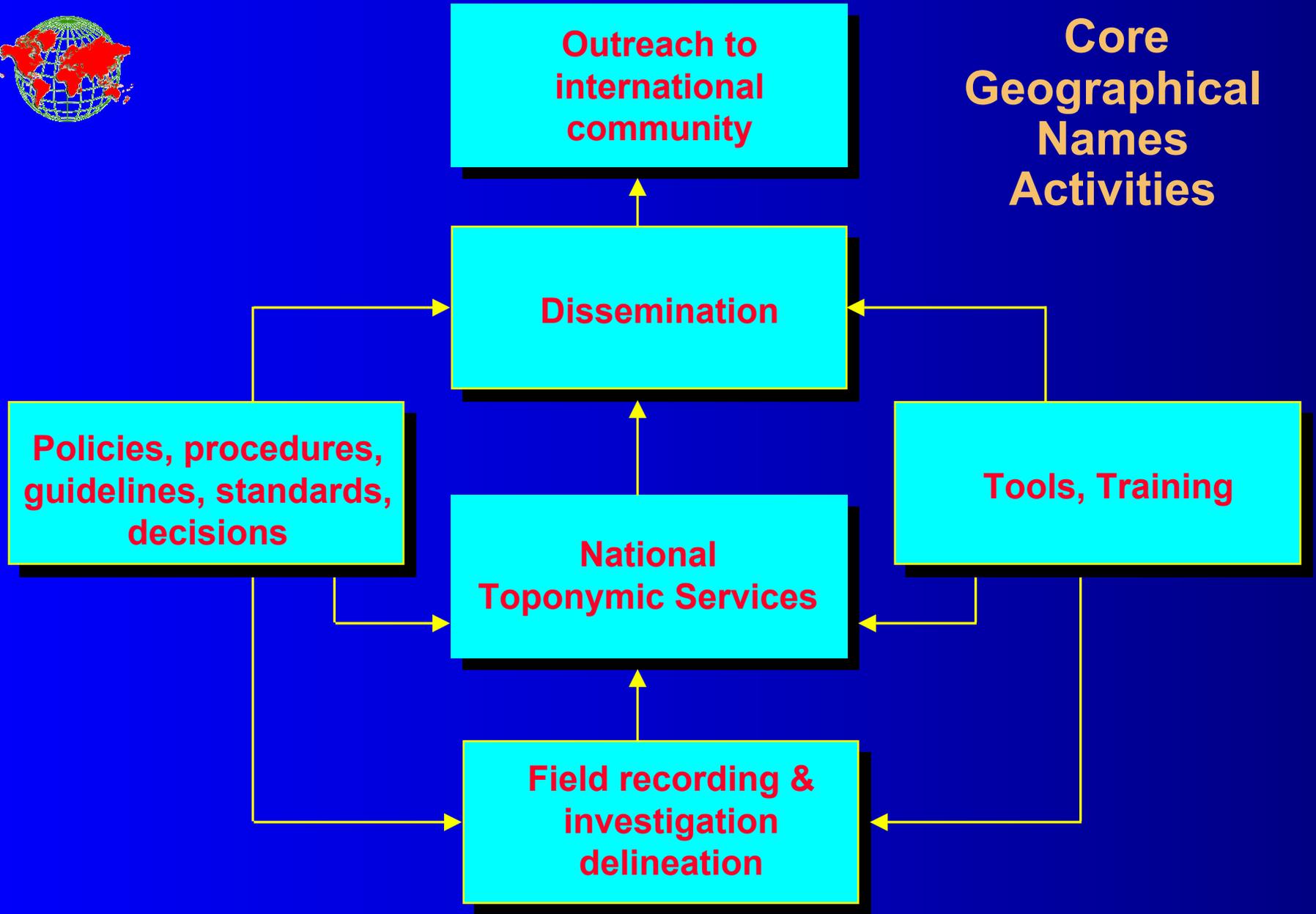
National names authorities …
known status, as of January 2006
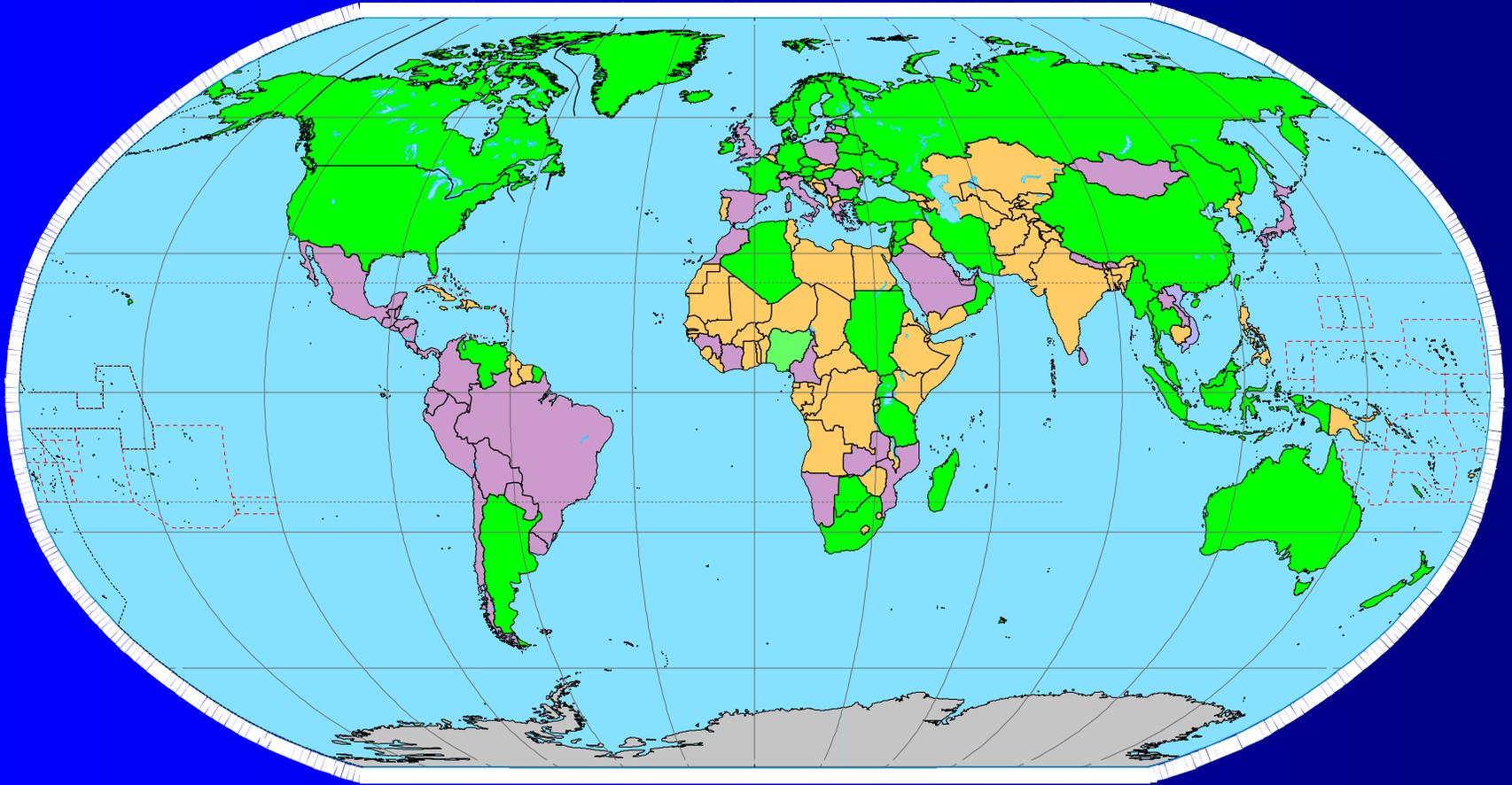
With national names authority | No national names authority | Status unknown

# United Nations and geographical names

*When, why and how is the UN involved in the standardization of geographical names?*

# Names questions in UN cartography

- Which do we use?  Clarity or confusion?
  - Bern / Berne; Bangkok / Krung Thep; Easter Island / Rapanui / Isla da Pascua
  - Falkland Islands or Islas Malvinas; Myanmar or Burma
  - Kazakstan, Kazakhstan, Kazahstan, or Qazaqstan
  - *Array of names for a single place*

- UN - avoid ambiguity and confusion
  - UNGEGN brochure
    - sets out value of consistent names

# Benefits of names clarity ?
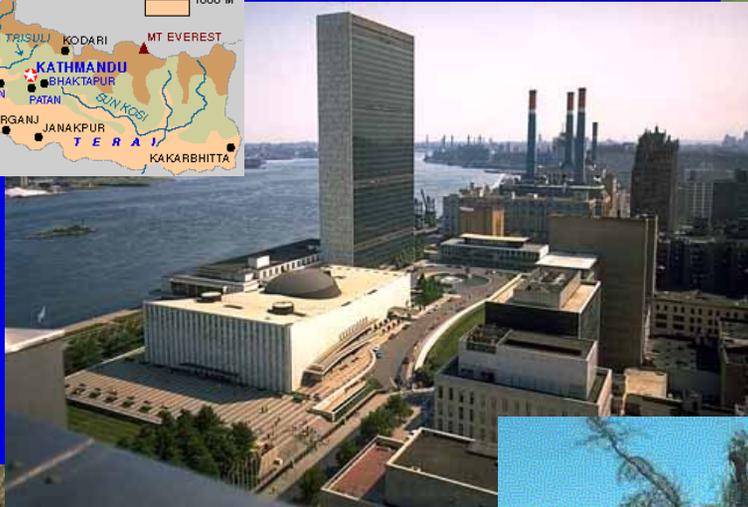
# Early days at the UN

- UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 1948
- First Regional Cartographic Conf. for Asia and Pacific 1955
- ECOSOC resolution 715 A (XXVII) 1959
    ... foundation stone
- Meeting of first experts
  group … 1960
- First Conference on the
  standardization of geographical
  names in 1967
    - National standardization
    - Romanization to international standardization

# UNGEGN structure

**UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN)**

**UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)**

**Working groups**

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

**D i v i s i o n s**

**22 linguistic/geographical divisions**

# Achievements
## - publications

- Reports; resolutions; technical papers (over 2000)
- Glossaries of terminology (1984 and 2002)
  - 6 languages; 345 terms
- Brochure – general information – 6 languages
- *World Cartography*
- Two new manuals – basic "plus"; technical reference

# Some other achievements . . .
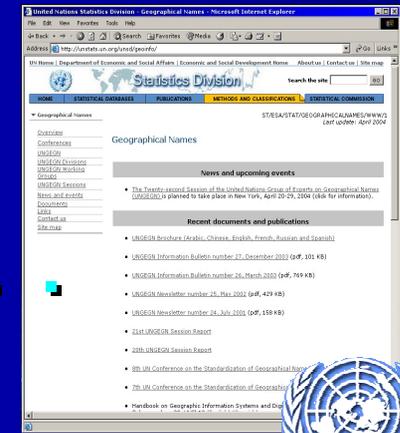
- Websites / Databases …
  - UNGEGN … unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/
  - Training … toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl
    - Web-training   ICA .. lazarus.elte.hu/cet
      CTQ .. www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca   Outils
  - Romanization … www.eki.ee/wgrs
  - Toponymic Guidelines
    …unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/toponymyguidelines.htm
  - Individual countries … see UNGEGN site

# International toponymy training



**Toponymy Training Courses**
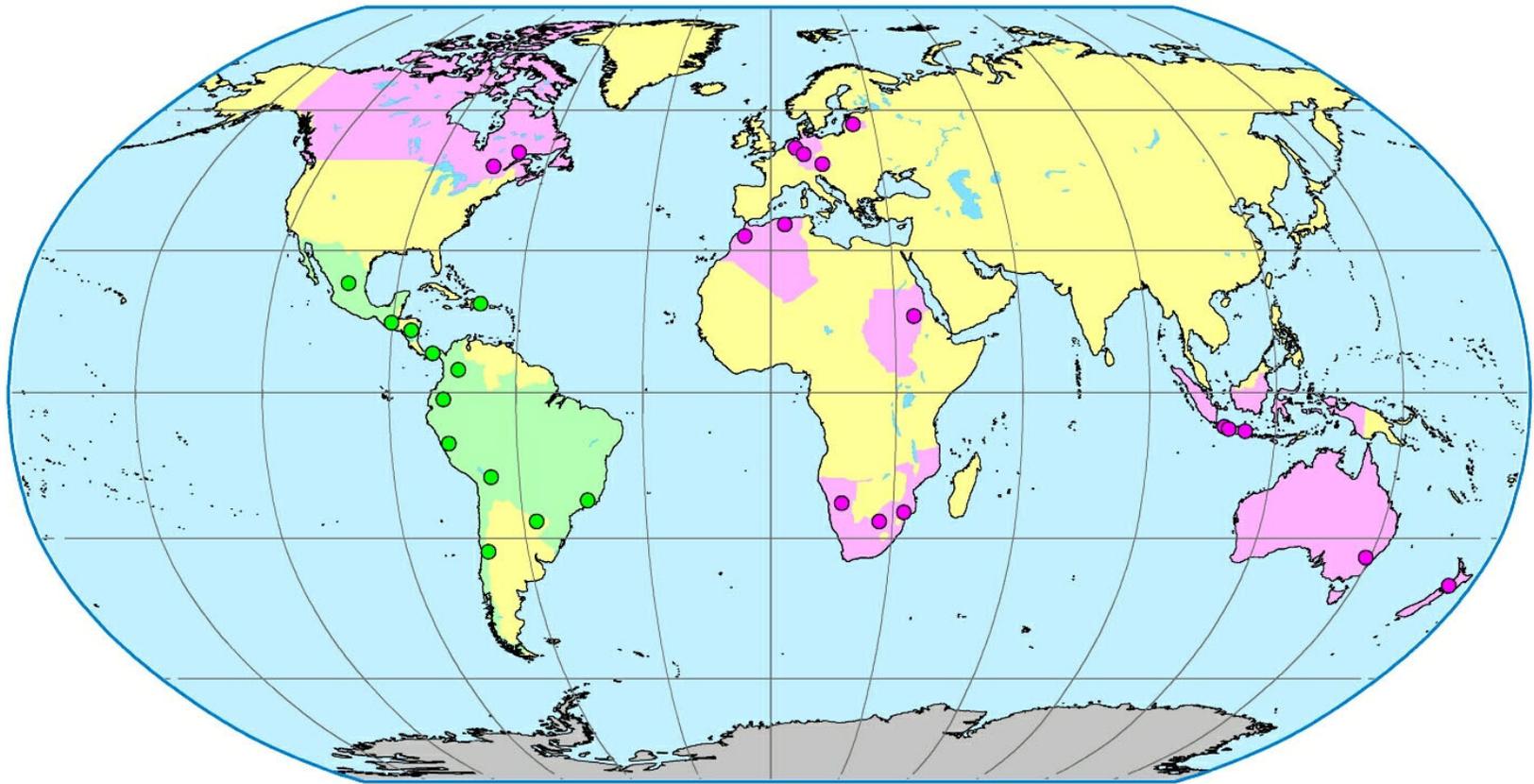
● UNGEGN courses          ● PAIGH courses

# Continuing need for standardization

- Major advances in technology and communication
  - Potentially larger audience
  - Easier to provide and receive data
- Enhances need for standardization
  - Data must be reliable/authoritative
  - Difficult worldwide to meet expectations

# Some current issues …

*Aim to address Conference resolutions*

- Establishing national names authorities
  - local → national → international

- Easy access to up-to-date standardized names
  - e.g. web gazetteer

- Univocity vs. multiple names
  - mapper's dream or cultural reality
  - clear indications for international users
    
    "Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors"

# … some more issues

- Use of endonyms vs. exonyms
  - aim to reduce use of exonyms
- UN data base – dream for single source of toponyms
- Single romanization systems  (28)
- Outreach to developing countries
  - training; participation in UNGEGN activities
- Encourage participation of user agencies
- Opportunity to promote work on indigenous names
- Conferences / UNGEGN sessions – technical rather than political

# Names around the world … ongoing issues and progress

- Opportunities using technology and synergy
  - *EuroGeoNames*
- Optimism re cooperation and contacts
  - *task force for Africa*
- Considering common concerns
  - *active UNGEGN Working Groups*
- Attempting the impossible? Unending task?

unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo

Olhe para o mundo com outros olhos

Looking to the future …
for improved communication and a world at peace