

UNSD Opening Address
UNGEGN International Course on Toponymy
IBGE, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,
15 May 201

President Paula Rabello, Director of Geosciences Wadih Scandar Neta, Moema Augusto, Vice Chair Portuguese speaking division, Staff of IBGE, international colleagues, a pleasant good morning. Am delighted to be here with you to conduct this international course on toponymy.

First, I extend greetings from the Director of UNSD, Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, he wishes participants a productive week. He has also asked me to share with you that for the UNSD training and capacity building are integral to its standards setting and method aspects of work. The division continues to support training initiatives undertaken by UNGEGN even with declining budgets.

We are pleased to recognize participants from the Portuguese speaking division, all but two representatives from its Member States are present. We also recognize those members from South America and participants from different agencies in Brazil and academia. Our three trainers with your team from IBGE have arranged a comprehensive five days of lectures, exercise, interactive sessions, discussions and a field trip. My charge to you is to maximize this educational opportunity, benefit from the over 60 years of experience and knowledge of Helen, Ferjan and Pier-Giorgio, and interact and network with each other.

I wish to also bring to your attention the large number of resources on toponymy guidelines, country experiences, on-line training and the names databases available on the UNGEGN website at your disposal. Toponymy experts frequently tell me it is the best repository of information available on geographical names. The material is largely available in English, however there is quite a bit of Spanish documents. I also understand that IBGE has been translating a few important documents to Portuguese some of which are available in your packages.

Helen has spoken on the importance of geographical names and of course you will be hearing more about this and other topics over the coming days. My additional charge to you is for those of you from Member States not yet having a names authority to become advocates to lobby your governments, Ministers, CEO's, Boards to create naming authorities to lead names standardization in your countries. Without standards there will be chaos, names must be standardized, like other aspects that affect our lives.

Finally, you are encouraged to participate in the upcoming 30th UNGEGN Session and the 11th Conference to be convened 7 to 18 August 2017 in New York. 2017 is a significant year for UNGEGN as it marks the 50th year of conferences. Many special activities are being planned. We invite you to submit recommendations to recognize contributing stalwarts for their participation and their contribution to the achievements of UNGEGN. We welcome your participation through the submission of divisional reports, special technical papers covering the many areas of work on names standardization and, contribution to the exhibition with posters displaying your work. Additional information is available in the upcoming UNGEGN Bulletin to be issued at the end of the month. I also encourage you to contribute not only to national standardization, but also at the regional and global levels. I have been made to understand that it is fulfilling work.

In closing I extend thanks to the UNGEGN training committee, Ana Cristina Resende and the IBGE team for hosting this training course and to all the participants who have made this week of activities possible. Please do enjoy the feast of knowledge prepared for you. Wishing you all an inspiring and rich week of geographical names standardization.

Cecille Blake
UNSD, UNGEGN Secretariat