

**UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
(UNGEGN)**

TOPONYMY CONTEST 2009 - AFRICA

On the occasion of the Twenty-fifth UNGEGN Session, the first to be held in Africa, a contest has been organized for African countries, to promote awareness of the importance of geographical names, the role they play in our relationship with the environment and in our spatial understanding. Geographical names form an essential component of a nation's geospatial data infrastructure, but will only function well if the written forms have been standardized, and that is what UNGEGN promotes.

The contest

The contest is to write an essay or poem about a particular geographical name or group of names (also referred to as *toponyms* or sometimes *place names* - names of settlements, rivers, mountains, areas, etc). For example, how the geographical feature got its name, what special relationship the author or his/her family has with the named feature, any specific problems in finding or collecting the name, the influence of the specific toponym on the author's life, the impact of a name change, or specific issues when a place has different names.

The objective

The contest aims to identify and honour those persons who are actively interested in researching and standardizing a country's geographical names and thus contributing to the development of a resource that is essential for a culture's survival as well as for a country's economic development. Through the publicity for this contest, UNGEGN aims to improve the understanding of the importance of toponymy, from the point of view of preserving cultural heritage and of providing an insight into our surroundings through maps and geographical information systems.

The prizes

The winners will receive:

1. A copy of one of the following:

- the toponymy publication *Toponymy, the lore, laws and language of geographical names* by Naftali Kadmon (New York: Vantage Press, 2002),
- the classic work *Lexique des termes utiles à l'étude des noms de lieux* by Henri Dorion and Jean Poirier (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1976),
- Arabic document أسماء الأماكن القبائل و الأشخاص في الجزائر ، التسمية ، (Nomination et dénomination des noms de lieux, de tribus et de personnes en Algérie) by فريد بن رمضان و إبراهيم عطوي (Farid Benramdane et Brahim Atoui), Alger : Éditions CRASC.

2. A two-year subscription to one of the following journals:

- *Nomina Africana* published in South Africa,
- *Bulletin Géographique* published in Algeria,
- *Insaniyat* published in Algeria.

3. A set of recent UNGEGN documents relevant to the standardization of geographical names.

Participants

The contest is open to citizens of all African countries, who are interested in toponymy, either from the viewpoint of preservation of cultural heritage, map production, working with GIS, or other endeavours related to toponymy.

Entries

Each entry should contain the following elements, written in one of four of the official UN languages spoken in Africa, namely Arabic, English, French, or Spanish:

1. Name, email, address and position of the participant;
2. Photograph of the participant and (optional) of the named feature cited in the entry;
3. Two letters of recommendation from employees of government institutions or from academic institutions (preferably one from each);
4. An original text (essay or poem), free from copyright, of at least 500 words for an essay and 250 words for a poem, and with a maximum of 1000 words. This text should reflect the themes indicated above.
5. A declaration in which the author transfers copyright of the entry to UNGEGN, recognizing the right of UNGEGN to use and publish the photos and text, whole or partially, either in paper copy or on the web.

Closing date

The materials have to be submitted digitally to the UNGEGN Secretariat in New York on or before 1 February, 2009. The address of the UNGEGN Secretariat is: zewoldi@un.org.

Announcement of the winners

The winners of the prizes will be announced at the opening of the 25th UNGEGN Session, 5 May 2009, in Nairobi. The decision of the jury appointed by the UNGEGN Bureau will be final. It is the intention of the UNGEGN Bureau to publish the winning entries on the UNGEGN website, and possibly to assemble other top entries in a special web-based publication.