



Gaborone Action Plan on Geographical Names Activities in Africa

**StatCom-Africa III
Cape Town, South Africa
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And other Participants of the Gaborone Consultative
Workshop**



Outline

- Recall StatCom-Africa II resolution on geographical names
- Why should statisticians be interested in geographical names standardization
- Geographical names standardization outlined
- Findings of the Gaborone consultative workshop
- Recommended actions
- What we request of StatCom-Africa



StatCom-Africa II

Recommendation (A-d)

- ECA to prepare a work programme, in collaboration with United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), that will lead to authoritative national databases, which will be consolidated into a continental database and feed into the global geographical names database.



Geographical Name Defined

- UNGEGN defines a geographical name as a name applied to a feature on earth
- In general:
 - A proper name (e.g., specific word, combination of words or expression)
 - Used consistently to refer to a particular place, feature or area having a recognizable identity
- Examples:
 - Populated areas (cities, villages)
 - Civil divisions (districts, states)
 - Natural features (streams, mountains)



Why of Interest to Statisticians

- ... important mechanisms for linking location-specific statistical data to meaningful identifiers
- Particularly census taking, dissemination of statistical products, and general communication
- Standardization is essential for the cross-referencing and sharing of location-specific data and information to enhance the development of location-based applications and services



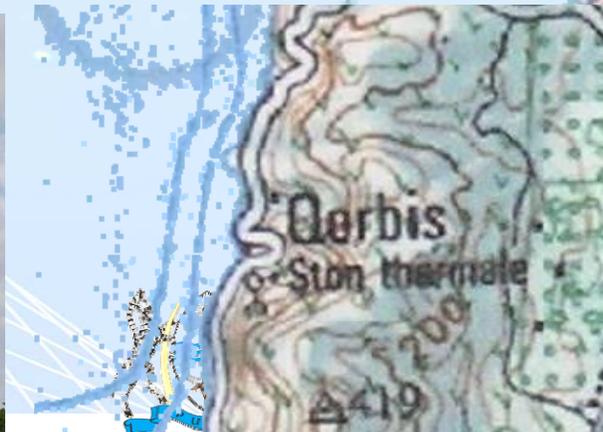
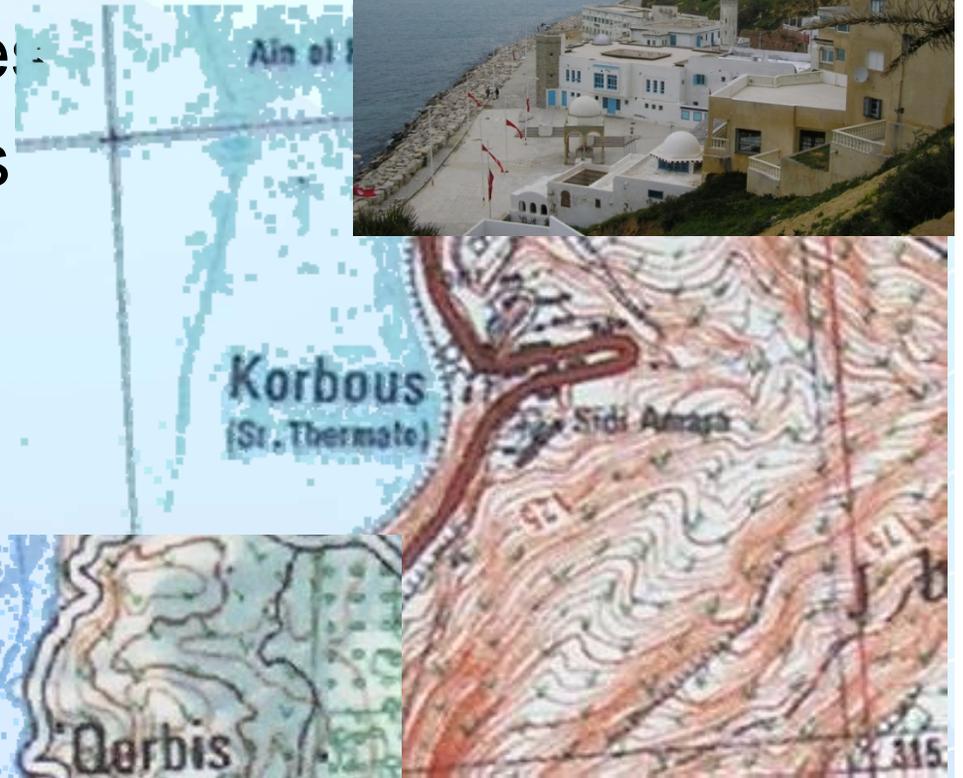
“Standardization”

- UNGEGN Glossary:
 - standardization, geographical names
 - “The prescription by a names authority of one or more particular names, together with their precise written form, for application to a specific geographical feature, as well as the conditions for their use.”
- Authority
 - apply some official status to names – written form
 - how name is applied
 - how used
 - romanization (?)



Standardization means -

- Avoiding –
 - Duplication of names
 - Poorly recorded names
 - Confused applications
 - Lack of quick and
 - Easy access to data



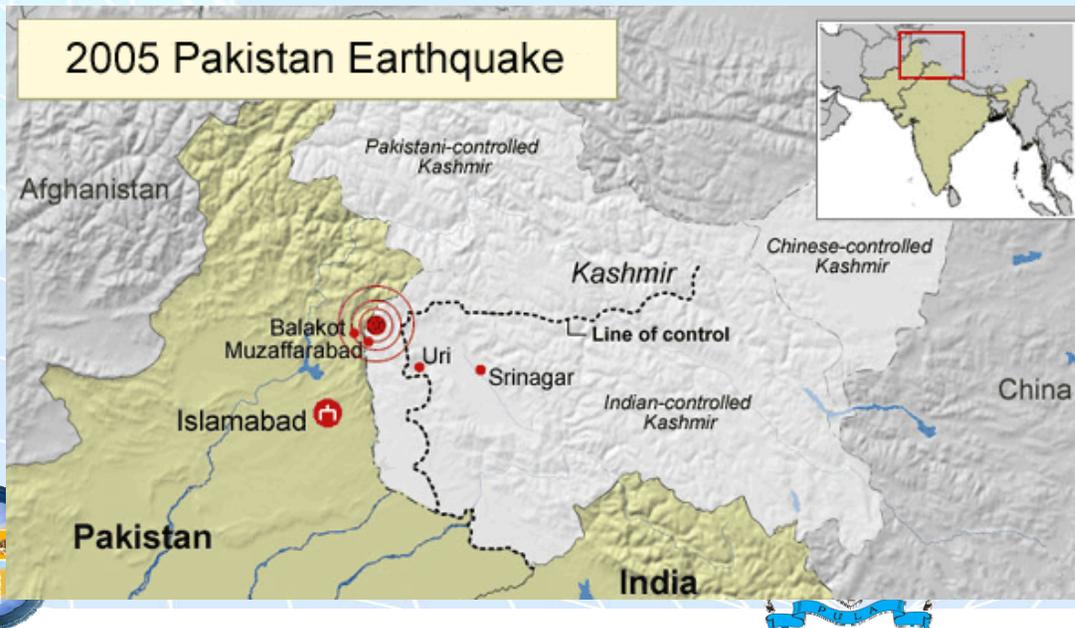
Everyone benefits

- National planning strategies
- Environmental management
- Emergency services coordination
- Utility infrastructures
- Peacekeeping operations
- On-board navigation systems
- Global media
- Tourism
- Map and atlas production
- Trade and commerce
- Property rights and cadastre
- Security strategy
- Communication systems
- Cultural heritage promotion



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



Other examples

- Duplication of names in an area
 - Confusion of address for emergency services
 - led to wasted time and loss of life
- Delivery services
 - More efficient with clear and
 - unambiguous place names
 - savings of time and money
- Name changes
 - Lack of information causes confusion in communication (e.g. airline/railway timetables)



The Road to Gaborone

- Following StatCom-Africa II, ECA and UNGEGN's Task Team for Africa organized a roundtable during 26th Session in Vienna
- Supported StatCom-Africa's call and proposed more discussion in the form of a meeting of experts
- Government of Botswana agreed to host the Consultative Workshop in Gaborone





FINDINGS OF THE CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP



Status of geographical names activities in Africa

- 16 out of 54 countries have a names authority
- 18 have an institution serving as contact on geographical names without the proper legal mandate from Government.
- No information on remaining 20 countries.



Problems and challenges

- **Lack of statutory naming authorities** that would provide the institutional framework needed to support the standardization effort.
- **Weak names authorities** - some countries have names authorities, but they do not function well.
- **Model for a names authority** - not many countries have taken the initiative to develop their own from good examples that exist.



Problems and challenges (contd)

- Lack of awareness on the value of geographical names standardization to higher levels.
- Weak or non-existent knowledge transfer at national level.
- Low participation in international meetings.
- Little or no geographical names products.



Big Misconception

- It is usually assumed that geographical names standardization is the sole concern of the mapping community
- But it is for everybody
 - Usually coordinated by inter-disciplinary (inter-ministerial or departmental) body
- And now we have the initiative on Global Geographic Information Management (GGIM)
 - Spearheaded by UNSD
- UNSD is also the secretariat of UNGEGN





KEY ACTIONS RECOMMENDED



Improve National Institutional Arrangements

- Increase awareness among politicians, mapping organizations, statistical offices, other government departments on how geographical names impact on their work
- Sensitize the public and media on using standardized geographical names
- Encourage governments of African countries to establish or re-vitalize national names authorities
- Establish and communicate contacts for countries; and within countries between government departments, universities, etc



Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing Activities

- Courses and workshops on geographical names standardization – concepts, skills, etc
- Encourage partners to sponsor participation in regional workshops and global conferences and events, such as UNGEGN sessions and UNCSGN
- Organize meetings of national experts to coordinate activities and share knowledge
- Side events of StatCom, CODIST and similar intergovernmental bodies



Cooperation and Coordination at all Levels

- National: incorporate into learning programmes at all levels; media campaign
- Regional:
 - Consider African Day on geographical names
 - Include on agenda of StatCom and other relevant meetings of appropriate organizations
 - Encourage countries to establish or revamp names authorities
- Global: Sponsor active participation in relevant international events



Advances in Technology and Communication

- UNECA to finalize and disseminate Africa GeoNyms gazetteer software – undertake pilot projects first
- Ensure GeoNyms adopts international standards for interoperability
- Assist countries to use appropriate ICT to ensure easy access to geographical names by all users



Other Issues

- Also addressed issues specific to revamp and operations of the Botswana Place Names Commission
- On request by ECA, proposed specific items for ECA's 2012-2013 work programme





WHAT WE ASK OF STATCOM- AFRICA III



Recommendation Proposals

- Endorse the Gaborone Action Plan
- Refer and recommend this Action Plan to CODIST and the Committee of DGs for consideration
- Call on National Statistical Offices to participate actively in the work of their national committees, commissions or appropriate geographical names coordinating bodies
- Call on ECA, AUC, AfDB and other partners to support the work of the Task Team for Africa in particular and geographical names activities in general





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

unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo

Thank You



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