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Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names

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of the Provisional Agenda

**REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS**

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TOPONYMIC TERMINOLOGY**  
**FOR THE PERIOD 1994 - 1996**

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UNITED NATIONS  
GROUP OF EXPERTS  
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Eighteenth Session, Geneva, August 1996

REPORT OF THE  
WORKING GROUP ON TOPONYMIC TERMINOLOGY

For the period 1994-1996

1. Working Group Membership

Formally, the following Experts were named as members of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology by the UNGEGN at its 14th Session in 1989:

Ms. Kerfoot (Canada)  
Ms. Närhi (Finland)  
Mr. Ficor (Hungary)  
Mr. Gonzales (Spain)  
Mr. Hornansky (Czechoslovakia)  
Mr. Lapierre (Canada)  
Mr. Lewis (United Kingdom)  
Mr. Payne (United States of America)  
Mr. Raper (South Africa)  
Mr. Sievers (Federal Republic of Germany)

Convenor: Mr. Kadmon (Israel).

While most of these have continued to be active, some have not. The latest list of UNGEGN experts who indicated at the 17th Session in 1994 their willingness to be members of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology is as follows:

Ms. Kerfoot (Canada)  
Ms. Lejeune (France)  
Ms. Närhi (Finland)  
Mr. Abdo (Saudi Arabia)  
Mr. Cruz (Spain)  
Mr. Dorion (Canada)  
Mr. Hornansky (Czechia)  
Mr. Kotsonis (Cyprus)  
Mr. Payne (United States of America)  
Mr. Pokoly (Hungary)  
Mr. Quinting (United States of America)  
Mr. Raper (South Africa)  
Mr. Sievers (Federal Republic of Germany)

Convenor: Mr. Naftali Kadmon (Israel).

## 2. Programme of Activities, 1994-1996

In complying with a request by the Rapporteur, the Convenor supplied, on 21 June 1994, a detailed Prognosis of the activities concerning the *Dictionary of Toponymic Terminology* for the period 1994-1996. See Appendix A.

## 3. Translation into the other UN official languages.

In Resolution No. 11, the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names expressed its decision to have the English version translated into the other five official languages of the United Nations. See Appendix B. However, after Resolution No. 11 had been approved by the Sixth Conference, the text was changed by the Secretariat by adding to the original approved wording "...that the United Nations Secretariat be asked to supply, within an agreed time frame, a translation ....from the English text into each of the five other official United Nations languages" the following: ...."and within existing resources" (see Appendix B). Consequently, the 17th Session of UNGEGN asked for volunteers from among the Experts to translate the *Dictionary* into their respective languages. The following Experts kindly offered their services, which UNGEGN gratefully accepted, as follows:

Ms. S. Lejeune and M. H. Dorion – French;

Mr. Du Xiangming – Chinese;

Mr. J. Cruz – Spanish.

Since no volunteers were found for the remaining languages, it was decided that the U.N. Documentation, Reference and Terminology Service perform the translation into Arabic and Russian. To this end the Convenor, as Editor of the *Dictionary*, supplied the UNGEGN Secretariat in New York with both a diskette of Ver. 2.0 and a clean camera-ready laser printout for distribution to the above named Experts and the Chief of the U.N. Documentation Service. On 23 June 1994 a request to this effect was handed to the UNGEGN Secretariat. On 29 October 1994 a reminder was sent. After a further letter on 9 April 1996 the Convenor was informed by the Secretariat that owing to a lack of resources no progress had been made with the translations into Russian and Arabic by the U.N. Reference and Terminology Services. Owing to an apparent short-circuit in communications between the Convenor and the Secretariat the English version 2.0 was only now (April 1996) being sent by the Secretariat to the four Experts named above for translation.

The situation thus is as follows:

French – Prof. Dorion reported that the French translation has been completed.

Spanish – no further progress reported;

Russian – no further progress reported;

Chinese – as reported already to the 17th Session of UNGEGN, Prof. Du Xiangming had supplied the Convenor with a first translation into Chinese, which still has to be finalized.

Arabic – no further progress reported.

Thus, while the work of editing the Glossary during the period 1989-1994, when no input of resources on the part of the U.N. Secretariat was involved, adhered strictly to the timetable, the same cannot be said for the period under review, owing to cuts in U.N. budgets.

#### 4. Translation into German

The Dutch- and German-Speaking Division of UNGEGN decided in 1993 to have the Dictionary translated into German. Dr. Karl-August Seel and Dr. Jörn Sievers negotiated the first contact with the Convenor and, after completion of the rough translation, asked the latter to send his comments and corrections concerning the German version. This request was complied with. The German *Ständiger Ausschuß für Geographische Namen* (Permanent Committee for Geographical Names) then produced a final version, which was published by the *Institut für Angewandte Geodäsie* in Frankfurt/Main in 1995.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. Exonyms

Although there had been a majority of Experts approving the definition of term No. 091 *exonym* as proposed in Ver. 2.0 of the *Dictionary of Toponymic Terminology*, some Experts taking part in the discussions of the Working Group on 16 June 1994 expressed opinions favouring a broader definition. Ms. Lejeune kindly collected a wide range of material concerning exonyms. As a result the Convenor proposes an amended definition, included in the list of proposed amendments under para. 7 below.

#### 6. Tasks for the Near Future

Since, for reasons outside the influence of the Working Group or its Convenor, the original timetable (see Appendix A), cannot be adhered to, the most urgent task now is to have the Dictionary translated into the remaining official languages of the United Nations, checked by the Experts appointed by UNGEGN, and edited by the Convenor/Editor. In view of the Sixth Conference "recognizing that, to achieve maximum effect in the standardization of geographical names at national and international levels, the glossary should be available to as wide a readership as possible" (Resolution No. 11), it is hoped that this project will be given the necessary assistance and facilities by UNGEGN and the Secretariat, whose task has already been made much easier by the above-named Experts' willingness to perform the translations into three of the five languages free of charge.

The second task, both current and extending into the future, is reviewing and periodically updating the Dictionary, as recommended in Resolution 11 (Recommendation 3) of the Sixth Conference.

#### 7. Revision of Existing Terms.

It is proposed that amendments to some terms defined in Version 2.0 of the *Dictionary* be discussed at the next session of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology:

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<sup>1</sup> Deutsches Glossar zur toponymischen Terminologie/German Glossary of Toponymic Terminology. *Nachrichten aus dem Karten- und Vermessungswesen*, Sonderheft. Verlag des Instituts für Angewandte Geodäsie, Frankfurt am Main, 1995. ISSN 0344-5879.

## A p p e n d i x A

### Working Group on Toponymic Terminology. Prognosis of Activities, 1994-1996

The prognosis of activities, as submitted to the Rapporteur, UNGEGN, during the 17th Session of UNGEGN, on 21 June 1994, was as follows:

1. Version 2.0 had been supplied to the New York Secretariat in 1993 on both diskette and printout (only the latter includes all examples in 11 writing systems and scripts, which is one of the innovations of this *Dictionary* introduced by the editor). Copies of these to be sent by the Secretariat to the Experts who volunteered to translate the English text, as well as to the U.N. Reference and Terminology Service, to be received by 31 July 1994.
2. Translation into French and Spanish by the respective Experts, and into Arabic and Russian by U.N. Reference and Terminology Service to be completed by 31 December 1994. Note: the translation into Chinese had already been performed.
3. All translated material to be returned to the UNGEGN Secretariat by 15 June 1995.
4. All material to be sent by the Secretariat to the Convenor of the Working Group by 31 July 1995.
5. Material to be collated by the Convenor and returned to the Secretariat by 31 December 1995.
6. All material in the six U.N. official languages to be reproduced by the Secretariat prior to the 18th Session of UNGEGN.

## A p p e n d i x B

### Resolution No. 11 of the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1992

Note: The text below follows the wording approved by the Conference and the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Additions and changes introduced at some later stage are indicated in square brackets.

## Glossary of Toponymic Terminology

### The Conference

Noting that a new glossary has been prepared by the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology, as recommended by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its fifteenth session,

Noting further that, in accordance with the same recommendation, the glossary was compiled, in the first stage, in English only,

Recognizing that, to achieve maximum effect in the standardization of geographical names at national and international levels, the glossary should be available to as wide a readership as possible,

#### 1. Recommends:

(a) That the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology be asked to continue to function, with the aim of producing a multilingual dictionary of toponymic terminology to include the remaining five official languages of the United Nations;

(b) That the United Nations Secretariat be asked to supply, within an agreed time-frame [and within existing resources,] a translation of the new Glossary from English into each of the other five official languages of the United Nations;

2. Recommends further that the United Nations group of Experts on Geographical Names, at its sixteenth session, appoint one or more experts to the Working Group to coordinate and be responsible for the translation into each of these languages;

3. Recommends also that the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology be asked to review the dictionary [glossary] periodically and update it as necessary.

### A p p e n d i x C

#### Exonym -- Proposed New Definition of the Term.

091 exonym

According to United Nations usage: name used in a specific language for a topographic feature situated outside the area where that language has official status, and differing from the endonym not only through conversion or the omission of diacritics. Examples: Warsaw is the English exonym for Warszawa; Londres is French for London; Mailand is German for Milano. The officially romanized endonym Moskva for МОСКВА is no exonym, nor is Sao Paolo for São Paolo or Pinyin Beijing, while Peking is an exonym. The United Nations recommend minimizing the use of exonyms in international usage.

A differing view holds that a name given by a particular linguistic community to a place which formerly belonged to a political entity (e.g. a country) where the language of this community had official status, and which differs from the official endonym, or to a place in an area where this language, while having no official status, is still widely spoken -- does not constitute an exonym.

See also traditional name.