

**Twenty-third Session
Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006**

**Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda:
Activities relating to the Working Group on
Romanization Systems**

**Report by the Convenor of
the Working Group on Romanization Systems**

Report by the Convenor of the Working Group on Romanization Systems

The report covers the period since the 22nd Session of UNGEGN held in New York in April 2004. The UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems has the following members:

Mr. Ass'ad S. Abdo (Saudi Arabia)
Mr. Brahim Atoui (Algeria)
Mrs. Caroline Burgess (United Kingdom)
Ms. Catherine Cheetham (United Kingdom)
Mr. Randall E. Flynn (United States)
Mr. Charles M. Heyda (United States)
Mr. Naftali Kadmon (Israel)
Mr. Mehran Maghsoudi (Islamic Republic of Iran)
Mr. Peeter Päll (convenor, Estonia)
Mr. Walter Petrovitz (Holy See)
Mr. Gerd Quinting (United States)
Mr. Alessandro Toniolo (Italy)
Mr. Peter D. Viechnicki (United States)
Mr. Paul J. Woodman (United Kingdom)
Mr. Boguslaw R. Zagórski (Poland)

The Group had a working meeting during the 22nd Session in New York. The Group discussed first the plan of action for 2004-2006, regarding individual languages/scripts and romanization systems. There are prospective systems that have already come or might come to the agenda of the Working Group, for example Byelorussian, Dzongkha, Georgian, Korean, Maldivian, and Ukrainian. Among the languages/scripts that have the UN-approved romanization systems the Working Group is still considering the implementation and possible revisions to Amharic, Arabic, and Khmer.

Following the meeting, the content of the Working Group website (<http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/>) has been updated, including all documents submitted by the WG since 2000, and all documents of the last UNGEGN session concerning romanization (links to the UNGEGN website).

The following new information can be reported concerning languages/scripts on the agenda of the Working Group.

I. Languages/scripts covered by systems recommended by the United Nations

AMHARIC

The Ethiopian Mapping Authority reported to the Working Group that although the UN-approved romanization system of 1972 was still in use in Ethiopia, there were significant alterations in its actual application. At present no diacritical marks nor apostrophes are used in romanized name forms, and the gemination is not reflected in romanization (name examples included: Aseb, Chench, Mekele, Nekemte, Asela, Dese, Dila, Gambela, Gojam, Ilubabor).

The system in use is therefore very simplified. There is a question whether such a system is still the same as the UN-approved one.

ARABIC

UNGEGN Information Bulletin No. 30 (September 2005) reported on the meeting of the Arabic Division of UNGEGN held in Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in April 2004 where romanization of Arabic names was one of the agenda items. The Arabic Division, having agreed to certain changes in the romanization system for Arabic, would refer these changes to the Arab League in order to take the appropriate measures.

KHMER

General Department of Cadastre and Geography, Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction of Cambodia sent to the Working Group some clarifications concerning the application of the provisional romanization system of 1995. No new developments were reported.

THAI

Following the adoption of the revised romanization system for Thai in 2002, the Thai section of the Report on the Current Status of United Nations Romanization Systems for Geographical Names was revised and submitted to Thailand for verification. After correcting minor errors the text was approved by the Royal Thai Survey Department in March 2004 and has been published on the WG website (<http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/>).

II. Other languages/scripts

ARMENIAN

At the meeting of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of UNGEGN in Kiev in May 2005, the Armenian Centre for Geodesy and Cartography presented a document that contained a proposal for the romanization of Armenian, as it was submitted to the Special Committee on Geographical Names of Armenia. The system is a mixture of romanization with and without diacritics. It was expected that the Committee would discuss the romanization system shortly but no new developments have been reported to the Working Group since then.

BYELORUSSIAN

At the Kiev meeting in May 2005, Belarusian experts were contacted with the aim of clarifying the status and prospects of the current system of romanization for Byelorussian. Currently there are no intentions to change the system and new gazetteers of the regions of Belarus are produced using this system. Belarusian experts were urged to present their system at the forthcoming session of UNGEGN in Vienna.

DZONGKHA

It was expected that the national system of romanization for Dzongkha would be finalized in 2005 but no news have been reported to the Working Group.

GEORGIAN

The Department of Geodesy and Cartography of Georgia reported that the national romanization system for Georgian (2002), as it was presented in the Report on the Current Status of United Nations Romanization Systems for Geographical Names, continued to be

applied in Georgia and the new series of maps on 1 : 50,000 would be compiled based on the official romanization instructions.

UKRAINIAN

There is still some discussion going on in Ukraine regarding the romanization system (1996) currently employed in cartographic products but no new decisions have been made. In May 2005 the Ukrainian parliament adopted the Geographical Names Act which has some provisions regarding romanization.

OTHER LANGUAGES

Working Group members have had correspondence with or sent inquiries to national names authorities in Eritrea, Laos, Maldives and Mongolia regarding the possible use of romanization systems but no new information has been received.

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