

**Twenty-fifth session
Nairobi, 5–12 May 2009**

Item 11 of the provisional agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology*

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The Working Group on Toponymic Terminology met during the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (9th UNCISG) in New York, August 27, 2007. The meeting was attended by 21 experts from 19 countries. The Convenor for the last eighteen years, Mr. Naftali Kadmon (Israel), announced that after having initiated the Working Group in 1989 and chaired it for almost two decades, he wished to step down from the convenorship. Mr. Staffan Nyström (Sweden) had accepted to take over convenorship of the Working Group, which was acknowledged by the experts present. Mr. Kadmon will continue to serve as editor of the “Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names” (printed in 2002).

The Glossary is also published on the UNGEGN website in all the six UN languages (pdf-format). An Addendum with the results from the work carried out by the Working Group since 2002 was published on this website in November, 2007. Part I of the Addendum contains eleven entries in the 2002 Glossary, whose definitions have been amended, from “address” to “underground toponym”. Part II contains eleven additional entries with definitions, not included in the 2002 Glossary, from “authorized name” to “transboundary name”.

The Working Group met again in Vienna, Austria, on May 22, 2008, in connection with the symposium GeoNames 2008, arranged by the Dutch and German Speaking Division of UNGEGN. This meeting was chaired by Staffan Nyström (Sweden) and attended by 12 experts from eight different countries. On the agenda was a) possible additions to the Glossary (“settlement name”, “field name” and “urban name” were terms discussed among others); b) the numbering of the entries in the Glossary and in the Addendum (technical and practical ways of making the Glossary even more useful and more easy to revise and expand in the future were discussed); c) ways to cooperate with the Terminology Group of ICOS (i.e. the International Council of Onomastic Sciences) were discussed. To start with the Terminology Groups of UNGEGN and ICOS decided to hold a joint meeting in Toronto, Canada, during the ICOS Congress in August 2008, and they did.

The two groups met on August 18th last year, jointly chaired by Milan Harvalik (Czech Republic) and Staffan Nyström (Sweden). Fourteen other onomasticians were present. ICOS has quite recently started to elaborate a “List of Key Onomastic Terms”, i.e. a list of terms with definitions and – when needed – examples. So far this list is available in English and German. During the meeting in Toronto the two groups discussed – among many other things – the overall purposes of the two terminology lists and also some of the definitions used. It was decided that a more thorough comparison should be made between the two lists in order to pinpoint any interesting discrepancies between them. Such a comparison will be presented in a separate working paper later during this 25th UNGEGN session. In addition a joint group was formed and given the task to ensure that information on the ongoing terminology work is conveyed not only within to two groups but also between them. ICOS representatives in this joint group is Richard Coates (United Kingdom), Milan Harvalik (Czech Republic), and Mats Wahlberg (Sweden). From UNGEGN Isolde Hausner (Austria), André Lapierre (Canada) and Staffan Nyström was appointed. The observations made and presented in the Working Paper mentioned above

will be discussed by this joint group as well as by the UNGEGN Working Group at its future meetings.

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