

**Thirtieth session
New York, 7 and 18 August 2017**

English

Item 3 of the Provisional Agenda*

Reports of the working groups

Report of the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Submitted by the Working Group on Geographical Names as
Cultural Heritage **

* GEGN/30/1

** Prepared by Ms. Annette Torensjö, Convenor, Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Summary

The aim for the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage is to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names, as well as to stress the scope of names as cultural heritage. Among the most important topics for the WG are geographical names used by minorities, legislation and policies regarding geographical names as cultural heritage and the promotion of fieldwork and the registration of names. The WG intends to make guidelines available on its website as well as present examples of good naming practices. The convenor of the WG invite experts to contribute good examples.

The Working Group

The Working Group was established to address Resolution 1 of the Eight Conference (Berlin, 2002) as Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Place Names, with the aim to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as means of cultural retention/revitalization. The name of the WG was changed at a side meeting at the 27th Session in New York 2012.

Organization

Convenor: Ms Annette Torensjö

Rapporteur: Ms Leila Mattfolk

Organization of work

The work within the WG is organized through meetings in connection with the sessions and on other occasions, preferably as joint meetings with other working groups or divisions or groups of interest.

Because of the wide range of aspects, the work within the working group is preferably organized through different focus groups.

Working Group activities since 2016

1. WG meeting at the 29th UNGEGN session in Bangkok on April 29, 2016.
2. WG meeting/workshop in Innsbruck on April 19-22, 2016 in connection with a joint meeting with the Working Group for Evaluation and Implementation and the Working Group for Publicity and Funding.

Further activities of relevance for the Working Group since 2016

The Working Group made a proposal to change the statutes of the UNGEGN through working paper No. 55/20 at UNGEGN's Twenty-ninth session in Bangkok, April 25–29 2016. The proposal stressed the need to include the notion geographical names as cultural heritage in the statute, while this notion permeates many of the UNGEGN activities today. The proposed changes were discussed, and the Group of Experts decided on the following wordings:

1. Under “I. Aims”, after subparagraph (c), insert a new subparagraph, reading: “(d) To emphasize, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respecting the equality among languages, the significance of geographical names as a part of the historical and cultural heritage and identity of nations.”, and renumber the subsequent subparagraphs;
2. Under “II. Principles”, after paragraph 4 (b), insert a new subparagraph, reading: “(c) The standardization of geographical names must pay attention to the inherited geographical names and their significance in the preservation of local, regional and national heritage and identity.”;
3. Under, “III. Functions”, after paragraph 7, insert a new paragraph, reading: “8.To increase the awareness of and respect for different languages, nations and cultures in an equal manner by promoting the use of geographical names that have been standardized on a national basis and that therefore respect local, regional and national heritage and identity;”, and renumber the subsequent paragraphs.

The WG Topics

- Geographical names used by minorities/Indigenous names
- Geographical names as cultural heritage
- Legislation and policies
- Fieldwork and the registration of names
 - Presentation of good practices, e.g., the Guide to the field collection of native geographical names (Provisional Edition), 1992, by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names
 - http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/rncan-nrcan/M86-29-1992-eng.pdf
 - The inclusion of urban names
 - The importance of a common feature classification
- Research on geographical names as cultural heritage
- Commemorative names
- The commercialization of geographical names

The topics are country specific, i.e. participating members of the working group should prioritize topics that suite the needs of their country, while the starting point are very different.

Work plan

- The Working Group will set up focus groups in order to be able to allocate tasks to the different experts within the WG.
- The WG will build up a website, on which documents prepared by the WG will be published, and where examples of good naming practices will be put forward. The website will also make guidelines available (e.g., regarding commemorative naming). The convenor of the WG invite experts to contribute good examples.
- The chair of UNGEGN, Bill Watt will update the maps made during the initial years of the working group, as long as he is provided data. It would be important to get name used in endangered languages notes on the maps.

- The Working Group will promote and support the national work to consolidate good practice for Geographical Names.
- The Working Group will organize workshops in conjunction with UNGEGN Sessions, focusing on topics of special interest for the members of the Working Group and arrange joint meetings with other Working Groups within the UNGEGN in order to strengthen the work with Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage.