

15 March 2019

English

**United Nations Group of Experts On
Geographical Names
2019 session**

New York, 29 April – 3 May 2019

Item 8 of the agenda *

Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions and evaluation of the work of the Group of Experts (Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation)

Report of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

Submitted by the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation**

Summary:

The full report highlights the activities of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation since the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in August 2017. The Working Group met once, together with the Working Group on Publicity and Funding, in Brussels in October 2018. Most of the discussion at the meeting was dedicated to the operation of the new United Nations Group on Experts on Geographical Names, a body that combines the former United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the former United Nations Group on Experts on Geographical Names; optimizing the five-day session, documentation, the format and presentation methods of working papers, guidelines for national and division reports, and further development of agenda items in collaboration with other working groups. The report also presents that the Arabic version of the database of resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names has recently been established. The Working Group plans to continue its task of evaluating the functioning and efficacy of the Group of Experts and the implementation of resolutions.

* GEGN2/2019/1

** Prepared by Sungjae Choo (Republic of Korea), Convenor of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

Report of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation¹

The work plan of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation, generally guided by the resolutions V/4 and VI/4 of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, included the following four items so far:

- ◆ Evaluating the functioning and efficacy of the UNGEGN and the Conferences, and the implementation of resolutions;
- ◆ Finding ways to involve member states not currently participating in the UNGEGN;
- ◆ Looking at the needs of developing countries to achieve national standardization of their geographical names;
- ◆ Proposing actions to increase the effectiveness of the Conferences, the UNGEGN and its Divisions and Working Groups.

At the beginning of the new UNGEGN, the Working Group proposes that it continues this work plan with just minor changes in the description, deleting the Conference elements.

Working Group Meeting, Brussels, Belgium, October 2018

The Working Group had a joint meeting with the Working Group on Publicity and Funding on the occasion of the *UNGEGN Scientific Symposium and Joint Divisions and Working Group Meetings*, organized in Brussels, 10-13 October 2018. The meeting was composed of two parts; a two-hour session on Friday 12th devoted to reporting progress made since 2017 and whole-day sessions on Saturday 13th to discussing selected agenda items. The former, held in the Prins Albert Club, was attended by 27 participants while the latter in NH Brussels Bloom was attended by 13 participants. The Saturday meeting was sponsored by the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII) of the Republic of Korea.

Items for reporting included the process of restructuring operational modalities carried out during the past two years (reported by Bill Watt, UNGEGN Chair), an outline of the new UNGEGN rules of procedure, the current status of the resolutions database (an update of the English, French and Spanish versions and a new establishment of the Arabic version), cooperation with UN-GGIM, etc. A brief review of the results of the evaluation survey conducted at the 11th Conference was also delivered.

Most of the discussion was dedicated to the operation of the ‘new’ UNGEGN as a combined body of the former UNCSGN and UNGEGN, with specific focus on the first session in 2019. Optimizing the five-day session, documentation, the format and presentation methods of working papers, guidelines for national and divisional reports, further development of agenda items in collaboration with other working groups, special presentations and an exhibition were major items for discussion. Action items resulting from the discussion were planned to be implemented in cooperation with the Secretariat.

¹ This working paper pertains to the UNCSGN resolutions V/4 (Work performed by the UNGEGN and its future activities), VI/4 (Working group on evaluation), IV/24 (Divisional activities), V/2 (Statute of the UNGEGN) and VIII/2 (Commemorative naming practices for geographical features).

Implementing resolutions

As an on-going focus and mandate, the Working Group has tried to encourage the implementation of resolutions at each country level, as well as in the UNGEGN context. In this stream, the documentation guidelines for the UNGEGN sessions and Conferences, including the current first session of the new UNGEGN, have requested each working paper to indicate the resolution(s) which relates to its theme.

The degree of reference to resolutions, however, is not yet high. An examination of the working papers presented at the 11th Conference and the 30th session shows that 42 out of 176 papers (23.9%) referred to resolutions, which recorded a lower rate than those at the 29th session, 36.5% (32 out of 88). Frequently referenced resolutions included I/4 (National standardization, 13 papers), IV/4 (Publication of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, 7 papers), VIII/2 (Commemorative naming practices for geographical features, 6 papers), VIII/4 (Exonyms, 6 papers), I/7 (regional meetings, 5 papers), V/6 (Promotion of national and international geographical names standardization programs, 5 papers), and IX/7 (Dissemination of information concerning the origin and meaning of geographical names, 5 papers). Austria, Germany, New Zealand and Dutch- and German-speaking Division reported their activities by resolutions.

The evaluation survey conducted at the 11th Conference shows that the resolutions are useful for promoting the standardization of geographical names (42 ‘very useful’ and 19 ‘useful,’ accounting for 91.0%) and implementing them is important in each country’s work on geographical names (39 ‘very important’ and 24 ‘important,’ accounting for 94.0%). Suggestions were made to raise the awareness of implementing resolutions; organizing sessions or adopting an agenda on this topic in related meetings and sharing best practices of implementing resolutions; improving communication between names authorities and data operating bodies and attracting more attention to the works of UNGEGN; securing more formalized delivery of resolutions to member states, and so on. Potential contradiction between resolutions, e.g., reducing exonyms versus promoting cultural heritage, was also pointed out.

UNCSGN resolutions database

With the four resolutions adopted at the Eleventh Conference, a total of 211 resolutions from the First to Eleventh Conference are now available in PDF texts in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese and Korean, and through the web-based database in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Korean. The Arabic and Korean versions of the database were recently established with the texts compiled and translated by Ms. Eman Oriby from Egypt and Korean experts, respectively. Both texts and database are accessible at the UNGEGN website: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/confGeneral.html>. The database, hosted by the NGII of the Republic of Korea, provides a useful engine to search resolutions by Conference, subject and key words.

Evaluation of the 11th Conference

Sixty-seven responses to the evaluation questionnaire, 59 on-line and 8 off-line, were received through a survey to participants of the 11th Conference in 2017. Most of the respondents indicated that it had met their expectations (65 out of 67, 97.0%) and rated the overall usefulness of the Conference very high or high (58 out of 67, 86.6%). The most expected aspect when coming to the Conference was ‘learning from other countries’ experiences (61 responses),’ followed by ‘networking with other experts (54),’ and

‘learning about updated standardization issues (50).’

An analysis of the likert scale evaluations on each item of the programs, contents, and logistics of the meeting, however, indicated that there were some variations in the assessment; the rate of ‘useful’ and ‘very useful’ being higher for documents and Working Group meetings, but lower for exhibitions and Division meetings (See Appendix 2 for more details). There were comments on the need for reserving more time for Working Group and Division meetings with minimized overlap of the meetings. The usefulness of special presentations and workshops was evaluated to be less positive than in the 29th session. Special presentations and panel discussions received general support to continue in future meetings, but there were also opinions to adjust them, in terms of the number and content. Suggested topics and focus of the future special presentations included urban and micro toponyms, commercial naming, minority names, crowd sourcing, census/data management, SDG data themes, and topics orientated to practical use or operation of standardized geographical names.

Some findings and comments were convincing that there would be a strong need to operate the five-day meeting more efficiently. It was commented that each presentation should search for the most efficient way of delivery, e.g., with or without showing on the screen, limiting time for presentation and discussion, preparing for national and divisional reports, minimizing ceremonial elements, etc. Twenty-two countries needed assistance for their tasks of the standardization of geographical names. Most of them wanted training courses or expert visits.

The evaluation for the first session will be conducted through an on-line survey, supplemented by an off-line questionnaire. The link for the survey and the questionnaire will be provided during the meeting.

Future of the Working Group

In the new UNGEGN, the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation proposes that it continues its work plan listed at the outset of this paper. Experts are requested to provide advice on future work that they would like to see undertaken by the Working Group.

The 211 resolutions adopted at the eleven United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names held between 1967 and 2017 will remain in effect, and will be augmented with those adopted by the new UNGEGN. The Working Group will consider what can be achieved by, and if appropriate undertake, detailed studies of resolutions in operation. The Working Group will continuously encourage UNGEGN experts and member states to relate their work to resolutions and to include these references in reporting results at subsequent meetings. The task may be feasible by maintaining the current logistical measures, such as reminding experts of documentation guidelines and providing the resolutions database.

Workshops on implementing resolutions are evaluated to function as a useful forum to share experiences of implementing resolutions by topics. Initiated by the topic of commemorative naming in 2016, workshops are expected to continue with other topics, such as the commercial use of geographical names, preservation of geographical names with cultural heritage values, in cooperation with other working groups.

The Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation has had joint meetings with the Working Group on Publicity and Funding to achieve synergy effects. The Working Group is steered by the convenor and

the UNGEGN Bureau, but open to other Working Group convenors and any interested experts. Mr. Gerhard Rampl from Austria is serving as the rapporteur of the two Working Groups. The next joint meeting will take place during the first session, scheduled at 13:15-14:00, 3 May 2019.

APPENDIX 1. Participants of the Working Group Meeting, Brussels, 13 October 2018

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Brahim Atoui (Algeria) | 2. Ferdinand Bako (Burkina Faso) |
| 3. Catherine Cheetham (United Kingdom) | 4. Sungjae Choo (Republic of Korea) |
| 5. Allison Dollimore (United Kingdom) | 6. Vehbi Esgel Etensel (Turkey) |
| 7. Peder Gammeltoft (Denmark/Norway) | 8. Aðalsteinn Hákonarson (Iceland) |
| 9. Jon Ivanovski (FYROM) | 10. Helen Kerfoot (Canada) |
| 11. Young-Hoon Kim (Republic of Korea) | 12. Gerhard Rampl (Austria) |
| 13. William Watt (Australia) | |

APPENDIX 2. Results of the Evaluation Survey of the 11th Conference, New York, August 2017

Table 1. Evaluation of the usefulness of each program and content of the Conference

	very useful	useful	moderately useful	of little use	not useful	very useful and useful (%)
Usefulness of documents	27	33	3	1	0	93.8
Usefulness of special presentations	20	39	4	2	2	88.1
Usefulness of workshops	18	31	11	1	1	79.0
Usefulness of Working Group meetings	27	33	3	0	1	93.8
Usefulness of Division meetings	7	35	2	5	8	73.7
Usefulness of exhibition/displays	14	30	15	2	3	68.8
Usefulness of talking/networking with experts	40	17	5	0	3	87.7

Table 2. Evaluation of the operation of the Conference

	excellent	good	moderate	poor	very poor	excellent and good (%)
Duration of the meeting	13	21	19	9	3	52.3
Allocation of time	10	33	16	5	1	66.2
Distinguishing discussion/information papers	16	28	16	4	1	67.7
Summarizing groups of documents	12	32	18	1	2	67.7
Resolutions prepared by the Conference	15	30	19	0	1	69.2
Time available for WG and Division meetings	9	28	18	8	2	56.9
Time available for cooperation with GGIM	11	23	23	3	2	54.8

Table 3. Evaluation of the usefulness of UNCSGN resolutions for managers of geographical names in promoting geographical names standardization

	very useful	useful	moderately useful	of little use	not useful	very useful and useful (%)
Usefulness of UNCSGN resolutions	42	19	4	1	1	91.0

Table 4. Evaluation of the importance of the implementation of UNCSGN resolutions in each country's work on geographical names

	very important	important	moderately important	of little importance	not important	very important and important (%)
Implementation of UNCSGN resolutions	39	24	3	0	1	94.0