

UNGEEN Speaking Notes

South African Geographic Names Council – Ms. Palesa Kadi

The South African Geographic Names Council (SAGNC) has made significant achievements to change the spatial legacy of apartheid through a name change. This is possibly one of the most complicated and contested spheres of our society since 1994. There is a mistaken notion that name changes are aimed at obliterating the culture and heritage of certain sections of South African society. This is not so. This is about social transformation and realizing the ideals contained in the Freedom Charter that says that ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it’. Every quarter the six provincial representatives, appointed by the Minister of Sport, Arts, and Culture convene for a meeting to present the provincial report for progress about name changes and standardization, legislation, policies, guidelines and strategies, work plans, and programs. This ranges from correction of offensive, derogatory names and misspelled names and storage to dissemination and use of names. It is worth noting that the South African government continues to fully fund this mandate through the allocation from national fiscus and managed by the Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture.

Aligned with the program of the UNGEEN session, the South African government invested in the data management system. The SAGNC GIS Solution was based on ArcGIS software. However, all datasets in the SAGNS are stored in MS SQL Relational Database Management System (RDBMS), within a single enterprise geodatabase. The geodatabase contains all relevant SAGNC data items, along with supplementary datasets obtained. Data stored within this database is served out to the web via web services.

The SAGNS offers users (both internal and external) a web page experience that enables sharing of the organization’s portal’s authoritative GIS data with other departments/stakeholders more easily, even if they are not used to working in the GIS. Users get access to documents, and maps and can load geographical names standardization applications on the site. The system can be accessed in any browser through this URL: <https://www.sagnc.gov.za>.

The SAGNC is assisted by its own Provincial Geographical Names Committees, as well as Local Municipalities (mostly Metros) and the Government entities of National Geospatial Information and Statistics South Africa for spatial verification and research.

In conclusion, the SAGNC intends to have periodic meetings to maintain a regular dialogue and identify other opportunities for discussion on matters of mutual interest or collaboration including the engagement of Google Maps and member states in the African region and abroad. The SAGNC will always be sensitive to the wishes of communities, but equally, going forward will be decisive in providing the necessary support that communities need.