

UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Report of the meeting of the Working Group on Country Names

Monday 19th March 2018, 14h15-18h, at the CNIG - IGN Saint-Mandé (Paris, France)

The meeting was held in English and French.

Countries represented: Algeria, Estonia, Finland, France, Poland, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, United States.

In the preamble, it was recalled that the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which meets every five years, decided at its 11th Conference (August 2017) to change its structure and henceforth to meet under the name of session every two years. Intersessional working groups can meet as needed.

This meeting of the Working Group on Country Names was held for the first time in Paris.

1. Monitoring changes in country names

Libye (la) – l'État de Libye, in French, Libya - State of Libya, in English, official names received from the UN Terminology Service (December 22, 2017)

2. Monitoring modifications in romanization systems as they pertain to local official country names

State of Libya - Dawlat Lībiyā - local long form: it was noted that the romanization of local official names in Arabic is all the more difficult as the vowels are not always indicated and their pronunciation varies.

⇒ Recommendation to update the Arabic local official forms to reflect the new Arabic Romanization system approved at the 11th Conference.

The country name Eritrea is written in at least 15 different ways in the reference works of Arabic-speaking countries, according to its pronunciation. It is therefore difficult to decide on a single official romanized form. The 1972 romanization system is still used in some countries while others refer to the system developed in 2007 and endorsed in 2017 despite numerous errors.

⇒ In the Notes section, put an indication of the system used.

Cabo Verde (without article) replaces since 2014 Cape Verde – Cap-Vert (le) - in all languages with Latin alphabet and is transliterated phonetically in other languages in the list of the names of the countries of the United Nations at the request of the country concerned.

Czechia, Tchèque (la): The short form has been formally adopted since May 17, 2016.

3. Continuing updating and completing local official forms

The following country names were studied according to the agenda communicated to the participants.

From the analysis of the list of comments made at the Working Group meeting held at the 11th Conference, it appears that clarification could be made for the following local names:

Algeria: The name of the country in Tamazight language (formerly called "Berber") could not be established due to lack of official confirmation. It is recalled that there are three different scripts of Tamazight (Tifinagh, Arabic, Latin).

⇒ In note: quote the official documents. On the other hand, refrain from writing it in local forms.

Fiji: the UN-romanized forms of (Fiji) Hindi name of the state would be: Phījī (short form), Ripablik āph Phījī (long form). Note that the syllable 'aph' in the long form has both macron and breve on 'a'.

Iraq: action completed, in accordance with the constitution, romanization of the Kurdish name according to the BGN/PCGN system 2007. Add this information in Notes section.

Mongolia: the investigation conducted would favor a short form identical to the long form. The example of Burkina Faso 'country of honest men' (the 'country of free men' version was also reported), which is mentioned sometimes in the Burkina form, sometimes in the Faso form, was recalled on this occasion.

With regard to long forms and short forms, it is pointed out that the short form, which is the usual form of the country, can sometimes be appreciated as the official form (for example, the French Constitution of 1958 mentions in Article 1 the France, and not the French Republic). However, the long form, also official, is the one that must appear in political or legal texts.

⇒ Add word *uls* "State" after *Mongol* for the short name. Add to the Notes section that "Mongol" is sometimes used as a colloquial short name.

Morocco: Morocco has officially chosen Tifinagh writing, which is not the case for other countries in the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa where Amazigh is practiced. However, the references of Romanization, which is the domain of the state, are not very clear.

The romanisation brought by Father Charles de Foucauld was noted in an opuscle edited by the IGN (France) in 1922. Make a scan of this document, to be distributed to the participants.

⇒ In note: the formalization of the Tifinagh writing for the Tamazight language. For Morocco, the WGRS would supply links and information according to the ALA system.

Pakistan: the inversion of words in Urdu is justified.

⇒ Make the inversion of the words of the local long form in Urdu.

Uganda: According to the investigation, Article 3 of the 2005 constitution is not enforced at all. Apparently the only official language is English.

⇒ Leave as is.

Montenegro: the alpha 2 ISO code is not yet given; only the alpha code 3 exists (cnr). On the other hand, the language is Montenegrin.

⇒ Operate the change of the language, and add the ISO code - cnr

State of Palestine - État de Palestine - Dawlat Filasṭīn: The United Nations classifies the name of this observer state under the letter S. However, the EFSRCA table classifies it with the letter P.

⇒ Addition of this observer state, to be classified under the letter P. Note that it is an observer State, in the same way as the Holy See.

Brunei Darussalam, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Marshall Islands, Nauru: pending investigation.

The UNGEGN document will be kept up-to-date by Élisabeth Calvarin.

A clarification: the "United Arab Emirates" is a federal state composed of several emirates. Rather than writing Al Imārāt al 'Arabiyyah al Muttaḥidah, it would be more accurate to indicate Dawlat al Imārāt al 'Arabiyyah al Muttaḥidah.

⇒ Find out from the official toponymic authorities of the country concerned.

4. Comparing existing lists of country names to identify differences and, where possible, to eliminate them

For the definition between country and state, see the introduction to the UNGEGN list.

There were very few differences between the lists, mostly typo errors. This will be taken into account in updating the UNGEGN document.

5. Continuing liaison with the terminology team of the United Nations Terminology and Reference Section

Contacts with the terminology team (Ms. Henripin, Mrs. Ariane Delacampagne) are excellent.

Contacts with officials of the Documents Division of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management in New York will be maintained.

6. Collecting and compiling a list of country names from national or other official sources

If they wish, the countries could supply links and information about lists of country names from national sources or other official sources, as much as possible available on the Internet.

France has used UN documents to build up the list of sovereign or dependent countries, up to date in 2016 - when there is no significant change for dependent countries. On the UNTERM website, it would be interesting to update the English list of countries recognized by the UN and unrecognized countries (in all about 200 countries).

Ask the terminology department to provide the initial document for amending.

Leo Dillon and Élisabeth Calvarin.