United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGGN)

Report of the Working Group on Country Names Meeting

1st Session
Friday, May 3, 2019, 8:15 - 9:30
UN Headquarters in New York (USA)

Attended the WG "Country Names" meeting, about 20 persons, members of the UNEGNN or Observers, from a dozen of countries, as well as the United Nations team (UNTERM), including Ms. Frances Enriquez who did us the honor of her presence.

After welcoming the members and guests present and thanking Mrs. Ariane Delacampagne, who was kind enough to be the interpreter and secretary, the Co-Convenor deplored the absence of Leo Dillon, Co-Convenor, unable to attend, and briefly recalled the purpose of this meeting: development and updating of the UNEGNN List of Country Names (reference: GEGN.2/2019/13/CRP.13, 15 March 2019).

This list has been updated thanks to the contribution of the United Nations Linguistic and Translation Services, the Co-Convenors of the Working Group on “Romanization” and experts, especially Mr. Maciej Zych and Paul Woodman, whom we thank warmly.

We thank the distinguished experts in advance for all they can do to improve the list and invite them to a discussion on the content of the document UNEGNN List of Country Names. The specific comments of the members were discussed and some actions are recalled, as follows.

1 – Monitoring changes in country names and continuing liaison with members of the terminology team of the UN language services

Any change of official names (short or long) in the six official languages of the United Nations can only take place through a diplomatic note from the Permanent Mission of a country, addressed to the Protocol and Liaison Service. United Nations, which is relayed by the UTERM team to the WG.

The coordination of the WG, in particular with the UTERM team, made it possible to record the following movements:

Guyana => the Co-operative Republic of Guyana: the long form, and its equivalents, includes the adjective Co-operative.
Libya => State of Libya: change of the long form, in Arabic and in the 6 languages
New Zealand: adding a note about Māori, note written by Mrs Wendy Shaw.
Palestine, State of: Adding a new entry, as a non-member observer state.
Swaziland => Eswatini, the Kingdom of Eswatini: official change of short and long forms, and its equivalents
Macedonia, Ex-Rep. Youg, => North Macedonia, the Republic of North Macedonia: official change of short and long forms, and its equivalents

2 – Monitoring modifications in Romanization systems as they pertain to local official country names, and monitoring of local official country names in Latin script
**Arabic speaking countries:** The set of names written in Arabic has been romanized according to the new system developed in 2007 and adopted at the 11th Conference (2017).

**Fiji:** Inclusion of Fijian Hindi National Official names in Devanagari and Roman scripts. We accept the Devanagari forms as found in the Constitution, and to change the Fijian formal name from *Matanitu ko Viti* to *Matanitu Tugalala o Viti*.

**Iraq:** In the absence of information on a national system of Kurdish romanization, we have added, as a note, that Kurdish is romanized according to the BGN / PCGN 2007 system, and have carried out the correction, *Komarî* with î surmounted by a circumflex accent.

**Lesotho:** We need caution authoritative source on the local long form. Postpone decision.

**Mongolia:** According to the Mongolian Embassy in Paris, the short and long forms seem similar, *Mongol uls*.

**North Macedonia:** Macedonian is the language name recognized.

**Pakistan:** On the recommendation of Naima Friha (Tunisia), we performed the inversion of the words of the local long form in Urdu, *Islāmī Jumhūriyah Pākistān*.

3 – **Continuing updating and completing local official forms**

**Algeria:** the country is still working on the linguistic aspects of the official Berber national language, especially its writing.

*Action:* pending.

**Armenia:** the note is not necessary.

*Action:* the note will be removed in the next version of the List.

**Kazakhstan:** the Latin script of Kazakh, under study, should become official by 2025.

**Marshall Islands:** question about the existence of different spelling of the National Official country name based on Marshallese language orthography.

*Action:* waiting for more information or reliable sources regarding the long form.

**Morocco:** according to Article 5 of the Moroccan Constitution of 2011: "Arabic remains the official language of the state. The State works to protect and develop the Arabic language and to promote its use. Likewise, Tamazight (or Amazigh) is an official language of the state, as a heritage common to all Moroccans without exception."

*Action:* If the tifinagh writing seems fixed, the system of its romanization would need to be specified.

**Turkey:** The Ambassador and Director of the Translation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey notes by e-mail (26 April 2019) that the French and Arabic forms of his country are doubtful.

It is not our responsibility to correct these names by ourselves, especially since the disputed names have been very stable since the introduction of the UNTERM Terminology Bulletin, in particular from No. 347 / Rev.1 (1997). Ms. Frances Enríquez, the Co-Convenors of the WG on Romanization and the Co-Convenor reiterated caution in the correction of the List, and spoke of the steps and procedures necessary to comply.

*Action:* stay very careful, and get information on long form in the 6 UN languages.

**United Arab Emirates:** request of clarification because it is a federal state composed of several emirates. Several sources already note *Dawlat al Imārāt al ʿArabiyyah al Muttaḥidah* (Google, wikipedia).

*Action:* need information through official national sources.

**Discussion**
Algeria: the new system of Romanization in Arabic was approved in plenary with reservations for the Maghreb countries, especially Algeria and Tunisia. The new system of Romanization in Arabic does not take into account the specificities of these two countries, and poses problems of standardization and preservation of national toponymic heritages. The Algerian renews expresses reservations on this subject, and informs us that his country is working with all Arab countries to find an acceptable consensus.

The ICA Observer expressed concern about the use of geographical names different from those of UNGEGN by the Real Academia Española (RAE), achieving a wide dissemination through the media, scientists, etc. In this sense, she proposed to strengthen the dialogue between UNTERM, Co-convenors and that institution to achieve a better approach to UNGEGN principles.

The Director of UNTERM expressed her feeling that if the United Nations accepts the collaboration and sometimes the advice of other institutions, the very strong external political pressures make it necessary to carefully modulate any proposal. She renews her wish for good cooperation between her department, France and the GENUNG. A discussion was held about the role and responsibilities of the UNTERM database (unterm.un.org) with regards to country names for UN usage. The former UN Terminology Section no longer exists and its duties have been handed down to linguists within the UN structure. Further collaboration between all was urged.

4 – Collecting and compiling a list of country names from national or other official sources

It was agreed that compiling an updated list of web links to official; or authoritative country names lists would be beneficial for information. This list is published on the Working Group’s page on the UNGEGN website. Since 2017, we have been registering lists of country names from 3 other countries. Indonesia; Lithuania; Czechia. The representative of Slovenia is interested.

A general question about sources: the Director of UNTERM spoke of consulting experts on place names, including country names, sometimes subject to enormous pressure, that UNTERM must update in 24 hours. Is there a way to establish two-way communication? The Co-Convenors could provide the e-mail address of the experts who sent the list of country names, prepared by them.

Other business
The Co-Convenor from the USA solicited interest from the members to take on his position within the Working Group. No candidate declared so far. The Co-Convenor from France stays, unless it is a problem. No objection.

Secretary of the meeting
Ariane Delacampagne
United Nations

Élisabeth Calvarin
Co-Convenor