

Minutes of the meeting of members of the UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems (WGRS) with Armenian experts

(10 June 2021)

Present:

- Vahagn Muradyan - Head of Geomatics center, Cadastre committee of RA
- Araksya Tonoyan - Secretary of the Professional Commission on Geographical Names, Cadastre committee of RA
- Yuri Varyan - Geographer,
- David Gyurjinyan - Chairman of the Language Committee
- Agapi Yeritsyan - Head of Review and Identification on Russian and other languages division, Ministry of Justice of RA
- Trdat Chalemian - Chief specialist of Foreign Relations department, Cadastre committee of RA
- Veronika Mikayelyan - Chief specialist of Foreign Relations department, Cadastre committee of RA.
- Peeter Päll, Co-Convenor, UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems
- Catherine Cheetham, Co-Convenor, UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems
- Allison Dollimore, member, UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems

Agenda

1. United Nations romanization systems for geographical names: principles and criteria for adoption by UN – Catherine Cheetham.
2. Overview of WGRS previous contacts and information from Armenia – Peeter Päll.
3. Current plans in Armenia regarding romanization of geographical names – representatives of Armenia.
4. General discussion.

1. Co-convenors WGRS thanked everyone for attending and introduced the goal and principles of the WGRS. As stated in paragraph 1 of resolution I/9 adopted by the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1967), they were a generally agreed aim of international standardization, to agree on “a single romanization system, based on scientific principles, from each non-Roman alphabet or script, for international application”. This same goal was endorsed in the latest UNGEGN Strategic Plan, at the 2nd Session, May 2021, when they agreed to “consider, contribute to and endorse a single standardized and scientific romanization system for each non-Roman script language; systems are proposed by donor countries, and intended for international use”.
2. The co-convenors described the task of the WGRS, which was to support and assist donor countries to help them create an accurate romanization system, based on sound scientific principles. It must be simple to use, so that any country could use the system to romanize maps written in e.g. Armenian and achieve the same romanizations. They explained that before the system could be adopted by United Nations, it must be shown to have a high level of implementation in the donor country (i.e. used on maps and road signs).

3. The co-convenors mentioned their previous contact with Armenian experts regarding the romanization of Armenian. In 2005, Mr Alfred Azizyan presented a proposal by the Centre of Geodesy and Cartography of Armenia regarding the romanization of Armenian at the UNGEGN divisional meeting in Kyiv. There was correspondence in 2011/12 with Mr Artur Avdalyan about the Armenian government regulations on rendering Armenian names in English. This led to the draft Armenian romanization system in October 2011.
4. The Armenian experts explained that the 2011 draft Armenian romanization system was still used in Armenia to romanize names. However, the experts had recently started to create two versions of a new romanization system, one with diacritics, and one without. They were also creating a new system for Russian transliteration, with which they had encountered some difficulties.
5. The co-convenors WGRS offered to help with any issues that the Armenian experts might have found. They explained that there would inevitably be some compromise in the romanizations included in a system if there was to be just one system for international use, but the benefit of a single system was the achievement of global standardization (i.e. so that romanized spellings were consistent wherever the system was used). The example of Chinese romanization was used, demonstrating how the same system could be used in every Roman script country; it was not specifically English-orientated.
6. The Armenian experts agreed to send the WGRS copies of the draft systems that were being developed. The co-convenors of WGRS agreed to give the WG's input to these systems from the users' point of view and also provide any further information and assistance that was required to support the experts.

Notes taken by Allison Dollimore