

**Twenty-eight session
28 April – 2 May 2014**

Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda

Activities relating to the Working group on Toponymic Terminology

Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology *

* Prepared by Staffan Nyström (Sweden), Convenor of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

Background and earlier meetings

The Working Group on Toponymic Terminology was set up by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its 14th session in Geneva in May 1989. The main tasks of the group were to produce a new glossary of toponymic terminology, and to periodically review and update the glossary. The first glossary had been completed in 1984, with revisions in 1986 and 1987. The first task was achieved in 2002 when the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names (edited by Naftali Kadmon, Israel), including 375 terms and their definitions in the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), was published in one combined volume with appropriate cross-referencing.

In resolution VIII/3 (2002) the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) recognized that “terminology is not at a standstill, and that future developments will require additions and/or amendments to the definitions of terms”, and recommended that the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology continue to function. At the ninth UNCSGN in New York (2007) an Addendum with a total of 23 entries were ratified and approved for insertion in the Glossary. 12 of these were terms in the Glossary whose definitions had been amended, and the other 11 were additional terms not included in the 2002 Glossary.

Both the Glossary and the Addendum are now found on the UNGEGN website.

Working group meetings have – since the ninth UNCSGN 2007 – taken place in Vienna (May 2008), Toronto (August 2008), Vienna (December 2009; together with the ICOS terminology group), Uppsala (October 2010), Vienna (May 2011) and Corfu (May 2013). For more details on these meetings see WP 17 from the 27th UNGEGN session in New York, and below.

The terminology data base

In accordance with resolution VIII/3 the working group has continued to discuss a number of already approved and published terms, as well as terms still lacking in the Glossary, but without proposing that any further amendments and additions be made available in printed form. Instead the working group (through Dr. Peder Gammeltoft and his colleagues in Copenhagen, Denmark) has developed a database on toponymic terminology, based on the printed UNGEGN Glossary (2002) and its Addendum (2007). The database is not yet completely ready to launch but major steps have been taken since it was presented in New York in 2012. It will be demonstrated again at this 28th UNGEGN session.

The WG meeting in Corfu 2013

The meeting was organized as a joint meeting of the two Working Groups on Exonyms (two days) and Toponymic Terminology (a half day). This cooperation comes quite natural since one of the major objectives of the exonym group is to clarify and define the concepts and the basic terms *endonym* and *exonym*, terms that are already included in the Glossary, and thus a responsibility also for the terminology group. More than 30 experts were present at both the group meetings.

The convenor of the terminology group presented some comparisons and differences between the UNGEGN Glossary and the list of key onomastic terms produced by ICOS (International

Council of Onomastic Sciences), for instance concerning the terms *hodonym/odonym*, *hydronym* and *oronym*. The differences were discussed but with one exception – *onomastics* – this did not result in any decided amendments in the Glossary. The ICOS list of terms defines *onomastics* as “the study of proper names in a scholarly way” while the UNGEGN Glossary gives two different definitions: a) “The science that has as its object the study of names” and b) “The activity or process of giving names”. Definition b) was now considered obsolete by the working group and will not be included in the digital data base.

The group also discussed some terms that are not yet included in the Glossary. One of these terms is English *settlement name* defined as “proper name of all kinds of human habitations (cities, towns, villages, hamlets, farms, ranches, houses, etc.) – e.g. *Paris*, *Turku*, *Yokohama*, †*Troia*, *Villa Bellona* (a house)”. This term and definition will be included in the digital data base.

The group also paid some attention to the terms *dual names*, *dual naming*, *multiple names* and *multiple naming*, already widely used in some parts of the world but not yet included in the Glossary. Definitions have been suggested by prof. Isolde Hausner (Austria) but these have not yet been seriously discussed by the working group. They will be in the near future.