

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

Minutes

Meeting of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

09:00 – 09:45, 2 August 2012

Tenth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN)

United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. The Convenor, *Mr Zaccheddu*, opened the meeting and welcomed the Members.
2. The Working Group discussed liaison activities with international standardization bodies. The Convenor reported on **ISO/TC 211** (Geographic information/Geomatics) noting that the Working Group had provided comments on the European core location vocabulary project, principally requesting that its definitions for geographical names be more in line with UNGEGN standards.

Working Group members had also provided input into the **Open Geospatial Consortium** (OGC) Best Practices Document: Gazetteer Service - Application Profile of the Web Feature Service Candidate Implementation Standard (OGC 11 122r1), highlighting concerns about a new interpretation of the ISO 19112 based schema in this updated WFS-G (Best Practice) document.

The Convenor would inform WG Members when the published document was available.

The Working Group discussed the absence of criteria for international features in this standard as well as in the European INSPIRE¹ programme. Problems surrounding a change in focus from a name-based to a feature-based model were also noted.

Mrs Burgess reported on **Unicode** liaison activities, summarising Unicode's involvement in the 26th session of UNGEGN and noting the recent releases of version 21.0.1 of its Common Locale Data Repository and version 6.1.0 of the Unicode Standard.

The Working Group would consider how part two (Toponymic data transfer standards and formats) of the UNGEGN Technical reference manual could be updated to reflect the significant technological developments that have taken place since its publication in 2007.

3. The Convenor mentioned the UN Geographic Information Working Group (**UNGIWG**) and the Center of Excellence for UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (**CoE4UNSDI**). *Ms Kostanski* gave an overview of the **UNSDI Gazetteer framework project** which is being piloted in Indonesia (<http://www.csiro.au/gazetteer>). The project involves the linking of Indonesian Government datasets related to geographical names and spatial identifiers and was aimed at building an instrument for planning for social protection. All OGC-compliant models developed during the pilot were open-source and available for consultation; tools would likely be made available within the next eighteen months.

Ms Kostanski would consult WG Members on a number of points that had arisen during her work on this project- particularly those related to gazetteer definitions, feature type classifications and Volunteered Geographic Information.

¹ Infrastructure for spatial information in Europe: <http://inspire.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

The Convenor reported on his membership, on behalf of the WG, of the UNSDI Gazetteer framework project's Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG).

The Convenor would consult Working Group members in reviewing scientific outputs being considered by the STAG.

4. The Working Group examined business relating to the Tenth UNCSGN. In particular support to the **UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**'s **GeoNyms** project was considered (<http://geoinfo.uneca.org/geonyms/>). *Mr Ezigbalike* of UNECA summarized progress made, noting that the geographical names collection and processing tool was at the trial stage and countries of Africa were being encouraged to start using it. Future plans included transition from a desktop to a web-based tool and the potential move to a new platform to enable the collection of crowd-sourced data.

Mr Ezigbalike would forward to the WG specific questions for technical advice.

The Working Group discussed the **UNGEGN World Geographical Names database** (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/geonames/Default.aspx>) to which Members were encouraged to contribute. There had been some problems with the display of Arabic-script names. The absence of a detailed global toponymic database was raised by Google. The WG noted that it was the responsibility of each country to provide a set of nationally standardized names, but acknowledged that the use of national datasets would not fully address the question of international features. The WG discussed the potential benefits of ranking multiple names in gazetteers and linking names output to relative scale. The difficulties in defining spatial features were also considered. A number of national datasets had addressed these issues but the principal obstacle for Google remained the discovery of such data. Google was encouraged to approach national mapping agencies and names standardization bodies to acquire further information.

The WG had recognized the importance of cooperating with the **UN initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM)**, a meeting of which was to take place in New York 13th - 15th August 2012. It had been agreed that UNGEGN had different responsibilities and its own mandate must be preserved.

Mr Watt would be representing UNGEGN at this meeting and WG Members were asked to forward to him suggestions for UNGEGN contributions.

5. The next meeting of the WG could be scheduled to coincide with the International Cartographic Conference which was to be held in Dresden, Germany, 25th – 30th August 2013.

Members were encouraged to forward to the Convenor other suggestions for hosting this, or a subsequent meeting.

6. The Convenor displayed the WG website address² which was hosted by Germany's Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy, and closed the meeting.

Caroline Burgess
United Kingdom
20th August 2012

² <https://network.gdi-de.org/display/wgtdfg/Working+Group+on+Toponymic+Data+Files+and+Gazetteers+of+UNGEGN>