Annex 1   Recommendations from the latest Working Group meetings

In 2009 the Working Group (WG) on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers discussed in February various subjects for an <u>out-of-session workshop in conjunction with UNGEGN sessions or Conferences, including simple database applications, data modelling, and lessons learned through projects</u> like the EuroGeoNames project. Members concluded that Working Group involvement should <u>complement and</u> <u>support the UNECA "AfricanGaz"</u> as well as further meetings should focus on the description of relevant work being carried out by member states. However, particularly for the latter item the WG shall always focus on what is beneficial to UNGEGN to address resolutions and data needs. This item can be addressed properly at the WG meetings and comments/resolutions can be posted in the UNGEGN Information Bulletin and on the WG website.

In May 2009 in Nairobi the objectives of the WG were discussed. Amongst others it was noted that <u>countries are no longer looking for data exchange formats but for complete multipurpose database solutions to set up multipurpose databases</u>. This fact should be reflected in the objectives of the Working Group somehow.
It was also proposed to add as an objective, supporting UNECA for its "AfricanGaz" initiative to the Working Group objectives.

Annex 2   Background

Separate working groups on gazetteers and automated data processing had existed under the auspices of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) since the 1970's. The two topics – <u>toponymic information processing and the formatting of toponymic information in publishable form</u> – were so intertwined that the fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN, 1982) recommended in Resolution IV/18 that they be treated in concert in subsequent UN proceedings:

> *The Conference ... recommends that future United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names should consider both subjects under the single agenda item "Toponymic data files, (a) creation, (b) maintenance and (c) output, including gazetteer production".*

At the eighteenth session of UNGEGN in 1996 a Working Group on Toponymic Data Exchange Formats and Standards was formed to investigate requirements for the encoding, processing, international exchange and promotion of nationally standardized geographical names for international use in a digital environment.

The *Working Group on Gazetteers and Toponymic Data Files* was constituted in its present form during its nineteenth session (1998), when the heretofore-existing Working Group combined with the above Working Group on Toponymic <u>Data Exchange Formats and Standards</u>.

The Working Group endeavors to promote further the aims of UNGEGN relating to the <u>collection and dissemination of geographic names information</u> as stated in the first report of the Group of Experts in 1960:

> *It is recommended that names authorities publish standardized names in gazetteer form as well as on maps since much information necessary for the proper understanding and interpretation of names cannot be included readily on maps.*

This seminal recommendation has been underscored and amplified in numerous resolutions of the subsequent United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Resolution 4 of the first UNCSGN (1967) defined the <u>recommended content of nationally produced authoritative gazetteers and toponymic data files</u>:

> *It is recommended that each names authority produce, and continually revise, appropriate gazetteers of all its standardized geographical names.*

It is further recommended that, in addition to the standardized names, each gazetteer include, as a minimum, such information as is necessary for the proper location and identification of the named features.

In particular, it is recommended that the following be included:

(a) The kind of feature to which the name applies;

(b) Precise description of the location and the extent, including a point position reference if possible, of each named feature;

(c) Provision for the parts of natural features to be additionally defined by reference to the whole and for the names of extended features to be defined as necessary by reference to their constituent parts;

(d) Such information on administrative or regional areas as is considered necessary and, if possible, reference to a map or chart within which the features lie;

(e) All officially standardized names for a feature, if there are more than one; and provision for cross-references to be made to names previously used for the same feature ...

The UNCSGN (1967) has similarly recognized the <u>importance of automated data processing in programs of national standardization</u> and in Resolution I/3 urged experts to <u>share lessons and experience gained in applying information technology to toponymic data management</u>:

The Conference ... Recommends that all Member States already engaged in programmes of automatic data processing or which have been involved in discussions on automatic name data processing be requested to exchange information, for which purpose it would be useful to submit the reports in the official languages of the United Nations ...

The UNCSGN (1998) has recognized the <u>standardization of geographical names utilizing the Internet</u> in Resolution VII/9:

The Conference, ...

1. Recommends that country toponymic Web sites be established and used for a variety of purposes, including:

(a) Information on the standardization of geographical names;

(b) Toponymic guidelines;

(c) Information on training courses in toponymy;

(d) Nationally standardized names;

(e) Interactive capabilities for handling geographical names enquiries;

(f) Facilitation of the international exchange of toponymic data;

...

The UNCSGN (2002) has recognized further the <u>importance of the integration of geographical names data into national and regional spatial data infrastructures</u> in Resolution VIII/6:

The Conference, ... Recommends that standardized geographical names data should be considered in the establishment of national and regional spatial data infrastructures and included in their design, development and implementation.

The UNCSGN (2002) has recognized the <u>increase of digital toponymic data exchange formats and standards</u> in Resolution VIII/7:

The Conference, ... Recommends that the Group of Experts, through its established liaison relationships with standards organizations, vigorously promote the development of international toponymic data exchange standards.

The UNCSGN (2002) has recognized the <u>importance of the assistance to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG)</u> in Resolution VIII/8:

The Conference, ... Recommends that the Group of Experts collaborate with UNGIWG in the design and construction of the toponymic component of the United Nations spatial data infrastructure;

... Recommends further that the Group of Experts, through its structure of Working Groups and Divisions, actively facilitate the provision of standardized geographical names information from appropriate national authorities to UNGIWG.

The UNCSGN (2002) has further recognized the <u>importance of standardized toponymic data-collection procedures</u> in Resolution VIII/10 noting the increasing demand for geographical names of all categories for use in a geographic information system (GIS) environment as well as in specialized and multi-purpose automated databases:

The Conference, ... Recommends that Governments expand their existing data-collection procedures for geographical names, and establish procedures for collecting names from all acceptable sources so as to be responsive to the needs of geographical names users.

The UNCSGN (2007) has recognized the <u>support of the geographical names database of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names</u> in Resolution IX/6:

The Conference, ... Recommends that the United Nations Statistics Division, with the support of the United Nations Cartographic Section for base maps and the Second Administrative Level Boundaries project for administrative divisions data sets, work in collaboration with the United Nations Group of Experts of Geographical Names and member States to further develop, populate and maintain the geographical names database of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, initially containing names of countries, capitals and major cities.

The UNCSGN (2007) has further recognized the <u>importance of the dissemination of information concerning the origin and meaning of geographical names</u> in printed or web-based national gazetteers and databases in Resolution IX/7:

The Conference, ... Recommends that, wherever possible, printed or web-based national gazetteers and databases should include information on the origin and meaning of geographical names, based on popular and/or scientific sources, along with the associated technical information.