United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers (WG TDFG)

Minutes

Nairobi, Friday, 8th May 2009, 08:45 – 09:45 hours

A Participants:

Johnny Andersen (Norway)	Bakhos Bakhos (Lebanon)	Bernd Beinstein (Germany)
Hubert Bergmann (Austria)	Pavel Bohac (Czech Republic)	Elisabeth Calvarin (France)
Bulent Cetinkaya (Turkey)	Catherine Cheetham (United Kingdom)	Naima Friha (Tunisia)
Chaker el Hajj (Lebanon)	Zeljko Hecimovic (Croatia)	Pierre Jaillard (France)
Elizabeth Kanalley (United States)	Solomon Kedebe (Ethiopia)	Helen Kerfoot (Canada)
Maroun Khraish (Lebanon)	Aule Kikas (Estonia)	Teemu Leskinen (Finland)
Ferjan Ormeling (The Netherlands)	Peeter Päll (Estonia)	Trent Palmer (United States)
Nivo Ratovoarison (Madagaskar)	Cemalettin Sahin (Turkey)	Ahmet Sarac (Turkey)
Mimi Urbanc (Slovenia)	Lou Yost (United States)	Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu (Germany).

B Minutes

TOP#	Minutes	Action
1	**Opening** The co-convenor *Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu* opened the meeting at 8:45.	
2	**Discussion on the maintenance of the website of the WG TDFG** The co-convenor asked for volunteers for taking over the WG website, but *Mimi Urbanc* agreed to continue as webmaster. However, she kindly requested the co-convenors to provide her with material in order to work on the WG website update. The co-convenor agreed with being more active regarding this matter in future.	Zaccheddu / Flynn / Urbanc
3	**WG business according to its objectives** The objectives of the WG (a) maintenance of the website, (b) keeping current the information in the report, (c) establishment of liaison to standardizing bodies, (d) establishment of contact with relevant ISO activities, (e) promote implementation of practical programs of toponymic data exchange and (f) conduct toponymic data exchange workshops.	

Regarding the objectives the co-convenor asked for any amendments of the objectives. He stated that countries are no longer looking for data exchange formats but for complete solutions to set up multipurpose databases, and this should be reflected in the objectives of the WG TDFG somehow. *Helen Kerfoot* advised against dropping the data exchange objective. She proposed to change its description into "monitoring developments in data exchange formats" so that this can be revised, if it becomes necessary again. The co-convenor proposed to add supporting UNECA for its AfricanGaz initiative to the WG objectives too.	Zaccheddu
Regarding a) and b) the co-convenor suggested to keep the WG members informed about toponymic items (such as databases and gazetteers) discussed within international meetings/conferences and that the papers presented by WG members should be incorporated on the WG website.	Zaccheddu
Regarding objective c) liaison activities and d) contact with relevant ISO activities, the co-convenor stated that *Randy Flynn* is the liaison with ISO TC211 and that *Caroline Burgess* liaises with Unicode. There is presently no liaison with other relevant ISO groups such as for the language codes. *Helen Kerfoot* asked to add to the list liaison activities with European groups like INSPIRE (liaison *Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu*) and thus extend the liaison activities mentioned under objectives c) and d). The co-convenor proposed to revise all objectives and send a proposal to the WG convenor *Randy Flynn* and the other WG members for comments.	Zaccheddu/ Flynn
Regarding e) practical problems of toponymic data exchange, *Maroun Khraish* stated that it would be very helpful if everybody provides the same structure for geographical names databases, and for instance use the UNECA "AfricanGaz" structure. The co-convenor replied that there is no need to do so for countries that already have their databases established as these could be easily converted to another structure or various exchange formats could be derived. The UNECA "AfricanGaz" concept allows its database to be easily adapted to local needs. This should also be stressed at training courses. *Helen Kerfoot* stated that the WG should support the UNECA principles. *Johnny Andersen* emphasized that geographical names databases of most countries have been set up for mapping purposes. But increasingly the databases are not just for mapping purposes but for publishing geographical names information in general, comprising information about language and other toponymic attributes. Nowadays language codes are added and XML export is possible. The co-convenor stated that experiences from other countries in restructuring or amending their databases should also be incorporated on the WG TDFG website. So all the experience put into new database structures like AfricanGaz should help. AfricanGaz facilitates export in XML, so it would be easy to integrate those geographical names databases into national, regional or international spatial data infrastructures.	All
Regarding objective f) conduct "data exchange workshops", the co-	

	convenor stated that future workshops within UNGEGN sessions or UN conferences should be focused on the discussion of specific technical aspects. Finally, *Lou Yost* recommended to record the WG support for UNECA AficanGaz concept in the minutes and in the objectives, and this is accepted by all participants.	Zaccheddu / Flynn
4	**WG business according to liaison activities – Unicode; OGC; ISO** Regarding the issues related to the ISO language code lists, the co-convenor stated that these lists currently seem not to be consistent for use in databases/gazetteers. The only standard with codes for all individual languages is ISO 639-3, but it cannot be used by several institutions in Europe as it does not provide codes for language groups/families; ISO 639-2 is a mixture as some individual languages are grouped here and others not; for the purpose of indicating a language to a name once, a need for one comprehensive and consistent language code list has been identified by EuroGeoNames and by INSPIRE. It was proposed to approach ISO in order to prepare such a consistent list. *Teemu Leskinen* proposed to discuss this in a wider group first; the only problem seems to be that of the Sami language codes. *Peeter Päll* stated that there should be no technical contradictions in between ISO 639 -2 and -3, and that it should be possible to combine all the codes into one list, due to the fact that definitions in 639-2 have changed recently. *Hubert Bergmann* stated that it is rather sensitive to demarcate languages and dialects and that this matter should be left to linguists and representative bodies of the respective language communities. *Maroun Khraish* gave examples of the combination of letter codes from different scripts to be combined for rendering Arab in Roman characters. *Johnny Anderson* showed that in Norway many languages are used and that if it were impossible to code the names accordingly, the database would loose much information. If the ISO 639-3 and the recently published standard ISO 639-5 standards could be used in combination, then the problem could be solved. On the other hand, two attributes for indicating language would have to be introduced. The co-convenor agreed that this might be a pragmatic approach, but asked *Johnny Anderson*, *Teemu Leskinen* and *Peeter Päll* to join him in the preparation of a clarification and proposal for ISO. All agreed, *Johnny Andersen* and *Teemu Leskinen* will take the lead and start actions. *Catherine Cheetham* agreed to participate in the meeting of the ISO 3166 Standardization group on Monday, May 11, 19:00, in Nairobi and to inform the WG TDFG about the main outcome of the meeting.	Andersen, Leskinen Cheetham
5	**WG business according to the next 26th UNGEGN session** The co-convenor asked whether the presentation of working papers within the UNGEGN session should be changed for the next session. *Helen Kerfoot* suggested to name focal points for the next session, but still allow all other papers to be presented. The co-convenor agreed with the	

	proposal and suggested that one principal focus might be the reference of all working papers with resolution Res VIII/6, which recommends to integrate geographical names better into the national, regional and international spatial data infrastructures.	All
6	**Next meeting of WG TDFG** *Zeljko Hecimovic* proposed to have a next meeting in 2011 in conjunction with the meeting of the Central East and South-East Europe Division. For 2010 *Teemu Leskinen* will find out whether a meeting in conjunction with the Norden Division would be feasible.	Zaccheddu/ Flynn
7	**AOB & Closing** The co-convenor thanked all participants for their input and suggestions and closed the meeting at 9:45.	

Ferjan Ormeling, Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu (co-convenor)