

Minutes, 15th Meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms, New York, UN Headquarters, 29 April 2014

The Working Group on Exonyms (WGE) met on April 29th 2014 during the 28th UNGEGN Session in Conference Room D of the UN Headquarters in New York. The Working Group's Convenor, Peter JORDAN, chaired the meeting and led the WG members through the agenda. The meeting was attended by about 25 experts, a list of attendance was not circulated.

Provisional Agenda

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ad (1) Opening, (2) Adoption of the Agenda

The convenor opens the meeting at 08.00 a.m. and welcomed the WGE members. He hints at the fact that the WG has no well-defined membership in the strict sense, but conducts rather a list of affiliated and interested experts, who attend meetings and receive invitations and information to and on meetings and activities.

The meeting approves the provisional agenda.

ad (3) Report on activities since the 13th Meeting in New York 2012

The convenor gives an overview on activities of the Working Group since the 13th Meeting in New York in 2012.

At first he reports on the **14th Meeting of the WG in Corfu, Greece, 23-25 May 2013**. He expresses his gratitude to the hosts of this meeting, the Greek UNGEGN delegation, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the City of Corfu. The meeting had been organised as a joint meeting together with the UNGEGN WG on Toponymic Terminology (Convenor: Staffan NYSTRÖM). The meeting was focused on the endonym/exonym divide and new definitions of endonym and exonym and consisted of three sessions: the first session was dedicated to general approaches to the endonym/exonym divide and saw papers presented by Paul WOODMAN (United Kingdom), Peter JORDAN (Austria), Staffan NYSTRÖM (Sweden), Phil MATTHEWS (New Zealand), Sungjae CHOO (Republic of Korea), Botolv HELLELAND (Norway), Ojārs BUŠS (Latvia) and Małgorzata MANDOLA (France/Poland). The second session highlighted specific aspects of the "Great Divide". Papers were presented by Peeter PÄLL (Estonia), Bogusław ZAGÓRSKI (Poland), Herman BELL (United Kingdom), Hiroshi TANABE and Kohei WATANABE (Japan) and Maciej ZYCH (Poland). The third session referred to documentation and use of exonyms and included papers presented by Drago KLADNIK and Matjaž GERŠIČ (Slovenia), Remus CREȚAN (Romania), Zane CEKULA (Latvia) and Sirkka

PAIKKALA (Finland). A general discussion on new definitions resulted in no solution or decision. Opinions were especially divided on whether language or officiality were essential criteria for the endonym/exonym divide. Other questions like whether the divide should be confined to differences in writing or is to include names of larger unpopulated features like seas were just randomly addressed.

Secondly, the convenor presents the **proceedings of the Corfu Meeting**, which had recently been published under the title “The Quest for Definitions. Proceedings of the 14th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Corfu, 23rd-25th May 2013, ed. by Peter JORDAN and Paul WOODMAN (= Name & Place, Vol. 3), published by Dr. Kovač, Hamburg 2014, ISBN 978-3-8300-7747-3. 287 p. They contain the 17 papers presented at the 14th Meeting in Corfu, plus an additional four papers written by authors who intended to join the meeting in Corfu, but were ultimately unable to present a paper: Halīm SABBĀR (United Kingdom), Ivana CRLJENKO (Croatia), Gábor MIKESY (Hungary) and Maria del Mar BATLLE (Spain).

ad (4) Main current agenda item: new definitions of endonym and exonym

The convenor reports on the discussion conducted in Corfu and on the main questions raised in this context: (1) Should we aim at umbrella terms focusing on the essence of the two concepts? (2) Is language to be mentioned as a differentiating criterion between endonym and exonym? (3) Is officiality to be mentioned as a differentiating criterion between endonym and exonym? He mentions also the very different approach of Phil MATTHEWS, who regards endonyms as names conforming to the rules of a certain language independent of the speaker-feature relation in space. These explanations are followed by a longer discussion in which the following opinions prevail:

- (1) The current discussion on the endonym/exonym divide is academic, while UNGEGN needs practice-oriented definitions.
- (2) In order to comply to its terms of reference and its tasks within UNGEGN, the WG should stop the discussion on new definitions of endonym and exonym and turn to more practice-oriented agenda items.

The convenor concludes that the next 16th WG meeting in Hermagor (5th-7th June 2014) will be the last opportunity to discuss the matter of new definitions and the last attempt into this direction. Should the WG not arrive at an agreement on new definitions in Hermagor the discussion will not be continued.

ad (5) Preview on the 16th Meeting in Hermagor, Austria, 5th – 7th June 2014

The convenor hints at new definitions of endonym and exonym as the main agenda item of this meeting, reports that there are currently 30 registered participants and gives also a preview on the papers announced, as well as on the excursion planned.

ad (6) Renaming the Working Group into “Working Group on the Endonym-Exonym Relationship”

The convenor presents an idea raised by Paul WOODMAN, but supported also by himself: Given that a fundamental tenet of UNGEGN is to give primacy to the endonym, in particular the standardised endonym, it is odd that UNGEGN should have a WG seemingly devoted to its counterpart, the exonym – a category that we have agreed should be restricted. The title of the WG can easily be misconstrued, the inference drawn being that the WG is in favour of promoting the exonym – which is quite untrue, for in reality the WG is dedicated to establishing the definition of and appropriate toponymic niches for the exonym. In reality,

therefore, the WG's terms of reference are more to do with considering the relationship or correspondence between endonyms and exonyms. *Working Group on the Endonym-Exonym Relationship* would therefore be the more appropriate title of the WG. In the minds of UNGEGN members, it would help to (1) legitimise many of the activities that have clearly become de rigueur for the Working Group as it advances its understanding of these issues; (2) avoid the erroneous impression that the Working Group is in favour of the exonym at the expense of the endonym.

This idea prompts an intensive discussion, in which the vast majority advocates for not changing the title of the WG for the following main reasons: (1) It is not the title, but the actual scope of activities that shapes the image of the WG as well as its mandate, reflected by Resolution 4 of the 8th Conference; (2) It would not be wise to change a well-established brand. The WG has achieved a recognised position under its current title. A new title will cause some irritation.

The convenor concludes that due to the overwhelming view for maintaining the current WG title, the idea of changing it will be abandoned and no motion into this direction will be brought forward in the UNGEGN plenary.

ad (7) Future activities

According to the decision taken under agenda item (4) the WG will after a last discussion on new definitions of endonym and exonym at the next meeting and workshop in Hermagor, 5th - 7th June 2014, turn to "Criteria for the use of exonyms" as the next agenda item. This item will be the main topic of a subsequent meeting and workshop.

ad (8) Date and place of the 17th Meeting

Brahim ATOUI (Algeria) presents the offer to host the next meeting in 2015 in Oran, Algeria. This offer is gratefully taken at note by the WG. The convenor mentions, however, that a decision need not to be made immediately, but rather following the meeting in Hermagor, when the results of the discussion on new definitions are on the table and the necessity of a meeting in 2015 is confirmed.

ad (9) Other matters

No other matters are raised.

ad (10) Closure

The convenor closes the meeting at 09.30 a.m. and thanks all participants for their interest and input.

Peter JORDAN, Convenor
Vienna, June 24th 2014