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PCGN Meeting Minutes, Monday 25th February 2013

Present

██████████	Defence Geographic Centre (JFIG-DGC) (Acting Chair)
██████████	Defence Geographic Centre (JFIG-DGC)
██████████	Defence Geographic Centre (JFIG-DGC)
██████████	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)
██████████	Hydrographic Office (UKHO)
██████████	BBC Monitoring (BBCM)
██████████	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)
██████████	Head PCGN
██████████	PCGN Toponymist
██████████	PCGN Staff

1. ██████████ acting as Chairman in the absence of ██████████ Director DGC, introduced himself and invited other attendees to do likewise. ██████████ and ██████████ were attending their first PCGN committee meeting, with ██████████ attending as representative of DGC Names Branch, in place of ██████████. Apologies for absence had been received from ██████████ (JFIG-DGC); ██████████ (Royal Scottish Geographical Society); ██████████ (OS) ██████████ (JFIG-DGC).
2. The Minutes of the 186th Meeting on 21st May 2012 were considered and approved; the action items arising had all been completed. The response to the query regarding the value of minority names was that these would be useful but no language specific requests had been received.
3. ██████████ reported on recent work completed by the staff. A thematic report detailing the most significant items had been circulated; ██████████ noted that items for which papers were available were highlighted and Members were invited to request any output of interest. A lot of work on policy had been undertaken since the 186th meeting, in particular due to the 28th BGN/PCGN Conference held in London in June 2012. The provision of names in Syria and North Africa had also been a particular focus of PCGN's recent work. In the international arena, in addition to the BGN/PCGN Conference,

PCGN staff had participated in the 10th United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names (UNCSGN); [REDACTED] had spent a week at NGA receiving training on the GeoNames Database; and two BGN interns had spent a week at PCGN in October 2012.

4. [REDACTED] reported on the 28th BGN/PCGN Conference, which had been well-attended by both US and UK colleagues and she thanked the Members for their participation. Several Romanisation Systems had been finalised at the Conference, including Korean, Chechen and Yakut and a joint approach to the presentation of Japanese romanised forms had been approved. It had been agreed to take a more pragmatic approach to spellings in Cambodia and reflect more locally-found names. Administrative updates had been agreed for 13 countries and a joint policy on Cyprus had been finalised. The Conference had agreed that collection of minority language names would be useful. [REDACTED] reported that the 29th BGN/PCGN Conference was scheduled to be held in Washington, DC 21st – 25th October 2013.
5. [REDACTED] reported on the 10th United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names (UNCSGN), held in New York in August 2012, which she had attended along with a representative from the FCO. She highlighted continuing support for African participation in UNGEGN; positive interaction with Google; and the establishment of a new group of experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGIM). [REDACTED] also described the various geopolitical issues which had occupied the Conference delegates. [REDACTED] noted that Google had added the label 'Persian Gulf' to its map and asked whether they published the background to such names decisions. PCGN would ask Google why they had chosen to add this name.
6. Attendees reported on toponymic matters arising in their respective organisations. [REDACTED] mentioned that the FCO's recent focus had been largely driven by the news agenda, highlighting Mali and Algeria and noting that some of the significant locations had not appeared on current HMG mapping. [REDACTED] mentioned that the FCO had been fielding questions on the recent naming of Queen Elizabeth Land in British Antarctic Territory.
7. [REDACTED] noted that the names of islands in the South China Sea had overtaken the Sea of Japan as the main political issue occupying UKHO's time. He described the Hong Kong Hydrographic Office's (HKHO) coordination of Electronic Navigational Chart (ENC) production over this area and UKHO's concerns about the names being taken from Chinese data. HKHO had been warned that the names would differ from those shown on other international charts and their use could constitute a maritime safety issue. A response from HKHO was awaited. [REDACTED] also reported that Vietnam was considering banning charts which used the name South China Sea and that this country had applied to join the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO).

ACTION: PCGN

8. [REDACTED] provided an update on the recent work of DGC Names Branch, which included the extraction of names from native script Jordanian and Syrian mapping and the application of the UK policy in the provision of names over Cyprus for CGIS.
9. [REDACTED] raised the issue of the application of conventional *versus* native names, which had arisen at a senior level within the MOD. He asked Members to consider the question of how to encourage a harmonised approach across Government and to promote consistency beyond HMG. Members were asked to be prepared to discuss such issues which would be a focus of the next Committee meeting. [REDACTED] proposed that Romanisation systems, personal names and toponyms should all be included and the balance between usefulness and correctness considered.
10. [REDACTED] provided a briefing on the work of BBCM, describing its task as being to observe, understand and explain the world's media. The focus had been television and radio but BBCM now also covered online and social media, looking at around 150 countries and 100 languages. BBCM's main partner was the Open Source Centre (OSC), which was a US government agency and the world was split between them. As well as its headquarters in Caversham, BBCM had several offices around the world. The organisation's priorities were driven by stakeholders, who could task BBCM. As of 1 April 2013 BBCM would become wholly licence-fee-funded, but this was not expected to affect BBCM's work, and stakeholders and OSC partnership would remain unchanged. [REDACTED] provided a summary of the products available and the various delivery methods.
11. [REDACTED] asked whether BBCM had an agreed list of spellings for place names. [REDACTED] explained that BBCM sought guidance from PCGN on this matter and also considered its customers in its decision. He noted that while BBCM aimed for consistency across its products, the spelling of names was inconsistent across the BBC as a whole.
12. PCGN staff presented several policy papers which had been circulated prior to the meeting for Committee Members' input. [REDACTED] presented a paper proposing a change to a dual-language policy for geographical names in Belarus, advocating the use of Russian spellings alongside the Belarusian names. Feedback received from BGN and Committee members had supported the amended policy. [REDACTED] asked how Belarus presented its names and [REDACTED] explained that both Russian and Belarusian names might be encountered in country but that maps and signs tended to use either Russian or Belarusian forms in isolation. The proposed policy change was adopted.
13. [REDACTED] outlined a proposed policy for Kurdish names in northern Iraq, noting that BGN had recently adopted a policy for the area. BBCM had pointed out that the Arabic form name would be more recognisable but the official Kurdish names would be seen. Of the options for UK policy presented in the paper, the most popular among respondents was that of Option 1¹. [REDACTED]

ACTION:
Committee

¹ Arabic/Sorani in all three provinces of Kurdistan and for the names of these three provinces; for the country name and any other national features with recognised dual names.

18. [REDACTED] presented an updated paper on the administrative divisions of Sudan, which listed the states and their administrative centres, as agreed by PCGN and BGN, following the secession of South Sudan in July 2011. It incorporated the two new states created in Darfur in January 2012. [REDACTED] mentioned that further details of the Darfur administrative regions, including a map, could be found in BGN's 28th Conference paper on the subject.
19. [REDACTED] presented a paper on the administrative divisions of Tanzania, which outlined the new divisions created in March 2012 and was the result of PCGN and BGN work on the subject.
20. [REDACTED] introduced several PCGN Information Papers on disputed areas which were currently of interest; the South China Sea paper had been completed and distributed; a 1998 PCGN paper on the Kuril Islands had been reissued in response to recent interest; a paper on the Liancourt Rocks described PCGN policy for the two islands, known in English as East and West; and a paper on the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands had been produced in response to queries regarding UK policy. [REDACTED] noted that while UKHO sailing directions followed the policy outlined in the Senkaku/Diaoyutai paper, the names on charts required updating.
21. Under *Other Business*, the new state title of Somalia (Federal Republic of Somalia) was mentioned and the FCO reported that its *Geographical Names and Information Bulletin* (GNI) had been updated to reflect this change. The wording for the entry for the Occupied Palestinian Territories had also been changed in this document to make mention of a recent UN Resolution², although it was noted that there had been no change to HMG policy. The ISO 3166 country codes document, which uses UN terminology, had changed its entry to Palestine, State of. [REDACTED] reported that the GNI was now up and running on the new www.gov.uk website in a CSV format³.

ACTION:
PCGN

23. [REDACTED] noted that [REDACTED] would be leaving PCGN in June and stated what a great loss her knowledge and experience would be to the organisation. He thanked her for all her great work over the years and suggested that the next Committee meeting be held prior to [REDACTED] departure⁴.
24. The Chairman closed the meeting thanking the Members for their attendance and active participation.

² UN General Assembly resolution 67/19; the United Nations Secretariat subsequently decided to use the designation 'State of Palestine' in all official United Nations documents and on nameplates in all United Nations meetings.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/geographical-names-and-information>

⁴ Subsequently arranged for Friday 21st June at BBCM, Caversham

Action Items and Key Decisions – Summary

Action Items

- PCGN would approach their contacts at Google regarding that company's application of the name 'Persian Gulf'.
 - The Committee would consider the use of conventional names *versus* local names within their organisation and consider how to encourage a harmonised approach across Government and to promote consistency beyond HMG in preparation for a detailed discussion of the subject at the 188th Committee meeting.
 - [REDACTED] would update the paper on Somalia's unofficial states to reflect recent changes and incorporate the Committee's points of discussion.
 - [REDACTED] would broach the subject of the names of Israeli settlements once again with the Policy Desks and explain the practical consequences of any policy decision and would discuss the issue further with the PCGN staff.
 - PCGN would forward details of the new Indonesian province to the Committee members [complete].
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Key Decisions

The following policies⁵ were approved:

- The use of dual-language (Russian & Belarusian) names for Belarus.
- Use of dual names in the three provinces of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, in the form Arabic/Kurdish.
- Arabic/Hebrew forms for the names of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories [as an interim policy].

⁵ PCGN Information papers on the new policies will be sent out to the Committee for further dissemination.