

---

**UNITED NATIONS  
GROUP OF EXPERTS  
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

**WORKING PAPER  
NO. 42/7**

**Twenty-eight session  
28 April – 2 May 2014**

---

**Original: French**

**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda**

**Implementation of Resolution and Activities Relating  
to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation**

**Plea for Creating a New Geographic-Linguistic Division  
For North Africa \***

---

\* Prepared by By Hamid OUKACI and Brahim ATOUI

**PLEA FOR CREATING A NEW GEOGRAPHIC-LINGUISTIC DIVISION**

**FOR NORTH AFRICA.**

**By Hamid OUKACI and Brahim ATOU**

This paper is a plea for the creation of a new Division of UNGEGN to North Africa to a hand to help countries south of the Maghreb countries in terms of standardization of geographical names but also, the result of close cooperation established between the UNGEGN and ECA/UN and the African Union, to harmonize them cutting the current divisions in Africa. This alignment might be complemented by the creation within the UNGEGN, a new Division for North Africa.

**THE DIFFERENT AFRICAN GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS UNDER THE UNGEGN:**

Africa is currently divided, in the UNGEGN, in four linguistic-Geographical divisions: the South Division, the EastDivision,the West Division and the Central Division.

These divisions are actually based on geographical division rather than linguistic.

Some African countries also belong to other territoriallyextra-African divisions such as Lusophone African countries, members of the Portuguese language Division, the French-speaking African countries, members of the French Division or that of South Africa, member of several divisions belonging to Europe including the 'Dutch and German-speaking divisions' and the 'United Kingdom Division'.

There is no North African Division. North Africa countries are members of the Arabic Division. And this in contrast to the division into use in the ECA / UN and African Union.

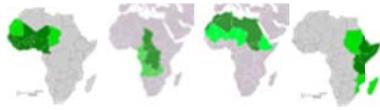
**II-THE CURRENT DIVISION OF AFRICA IN THE AFRICANBODIES INCLUDING THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMISSION /UNand the AFRICAN UNION**

The model of UNGEGN division does not correspond to that used in African political bodies in particular in the ECA / UN and the African Union

The division of Africa is purely geographically.

**The Different current geographical divisions in the ECA/ UN andthe African Union**

Africa West Division    Africa Central Division    Africa North Division    Africa East Division



Africa South Division



**WEST AFRICA** : Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde ,Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea a Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

**But Mali, Tchad and Niger can be also part of the North Africa as mentioned in light green**

**CENTRAL AFRICA**: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, SaoTomé and Príncipe, Chad.

**Chad can also be part of the Central Division and / or West Division as well as Mauritania, which is also in the Western Division or the Sudan which is also in the Eastern Division.**

**NORTH AFRICA** :Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, SouthSudan.

**EAST AFRICA**:Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania,

**SOUTHERN AFRICA**:South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

#### **NEED FOR ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE UNGEGN, THE ECA / UN AND THE AU.**

By the establishment of the Task Team for Africa, and the dynamic resulting from and by the growing involvement of ECA/ UN and A/U in the activities of UNGEGN and the standardization of geographical names in Africa, the harmonization of division between the UNGEGN and those two bodies, would be a major asset for a coordination up to give a new impetus to cooperation that could be beneficial for the standardization of geographical names in Africa.

Thus, the establishment of a Division for North Africa would be one factor contributing to that harmonization.

## WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO CREATE A DIVISION FOR NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES?

The proposed Division (would include the following countries: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Mali, Niger and Chad.

### Countries proposed to be part of the new North African Division.



It is understood that under the rules of the UNGEGN which clearly states that '**Countries decide for themselves the division(s) to which they wish to belong, some belong to more than one division**', these countries continue to be part of other divisions of their choice like, for example Mauritania which is part of the Arabic Division and the Western Division. )

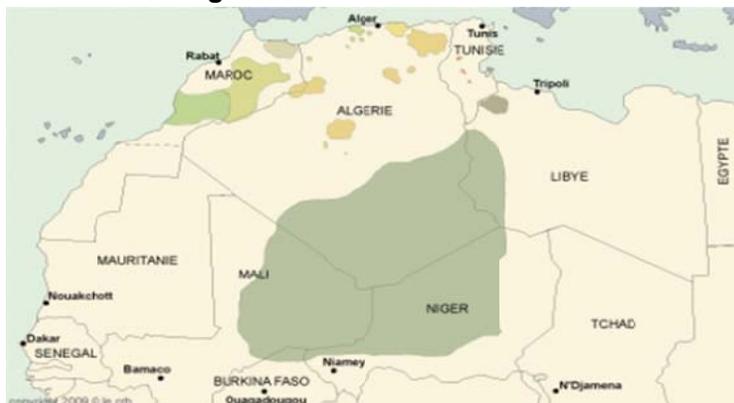
These countries share not only the spatial but also the culture and the language.

Indeed, if we observe the linguistic map, we notice that many of these countries share the Berber language. And therefore all the space covered by this language, carries a toponymy resulting of the Tuareg or the Arabic languages.

Arabic is spoken not only in almost all of these countries specially in their Northern territories, but in some countries like Chad, it has even the status of official language.

### SPATIAL AND LINGUISTIC HOMOGENEITY:

#### Linguistic area of the different Berber dialects in North Africa





There is no doubt that this division once created, would be a very stimulating factor for the development of the toponymic activity in the African region. It would allow countries, which until this day, do not benefit enough from the standardization of geographical names, to join us and participate in the progress of the standardization of geographical names.

It is also to note that the member of the proposed Division have agreed to meet next September in Algiers and in the presence of ECA / A and GENUNG for a first meeting to coordinate the activities Gazetteer them especially with regard to the adoption of a Romanization system specific to this Division.