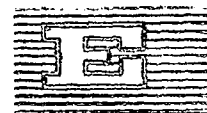


UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

E/CONF.53/C.4/1
20 September 1967

Original: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Dual distribution

Geneva, 4-22 September 1967

DRAFT REPORT OF COMMITTEE IV

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

DRAFT REPORT OF COMMITTEE IV - INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

The Committee held four meetings during which item 12 of the Conference Agenda was studied.

The Committee considered the following papers submitted to the Conference: E/CONF.53/L.1 and Add.1, E/CONF.53/L.2 (pp. 5-6), E/CONF.53/L.15, E/CONF.53/L.26 (pp. 3-5), E/CONF.53/L.38 (p.51), E/CONF.53/L.42, L.54, L.57 and L.67.

The Agenda sub-items were re-arranged under six headings, as follows:

- I. Formation of a Permanent Commission on Geographical Names
 - II. Exchanges of Information and Bibliography
 - III. Technical Assistance
 - IV. Regional Meetings
 - V. Names of Features extending beyond a single sovereignty
 - VI. Steps towards international standardization.
- I. Formation of a Permanent Commission on Geographical Names

It was agreed that the good work done and momentum attained before and during the Conference would best be continued and strengthened by the formation of a Permanent Committee within the structure of the United Nations. The membership and functions of such a Committee were discussed. The experiences of some national names authorities were considered to be relevant. A Working Group was formed to draft a resolution and supporting explanatory background paper. Its members were representatives of Canada, China, Federal Republic of Germany, Iran, Netherlands, USA, USSR and the IHB observer. It was assisted by the representative of the Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary, and the Chairman of the Conference.

The text of the background paper as finally approved reads as follows:

Background Paper in support of resolution on establishment of a Permanent Commission

"The writing of geographical names on maps and other documents has long been a source of difficulty and confusion and an obstacle to smooth progress and understanding in many economic, social and scientific activities, both national and international.

1. Some examples of the problems are:
 - (a) places having different names in different languages - e.g. Jerusalem/El Quds;
 - (b) places having different spellings in different languages: Geneva/Genève/Genf/Ginebra/Ginevra;
 - (c) different methods of transliterating from one alphabet to another - e.g. from Arabic: Wadi el Jabal/Ouadi el Djebel/Ouadi el Gabal;
 - (d) different methods of transcribing ideographic languages (e.g. Chinese) to alphabetic languages;
 - (e) differing methods of rendering names from unwritten languages;
 - (f) the exact extent of named geographical features;
 - (g) variations in the meanings of common geographic terms - e.g. creek may refer to an inlet from the sea or to a small stream far from the sea.
2. The lack of standardized names has caused difficulty in the work of map makers, statisticians, census takers and others, leading to undue and harmful delay and mistakes. Confusion is caused in the interpretation of legal and administrative documents dealing with such matters as boundaries or areas of jurisdiction.
3. Nearly a century ago (in 1873) the first meeting of the International Geographical Union noted the problem and passed a resolution that international usage should be based on national standardization. Other resolutions have followed at later meetings of this and other international organizations.
4. The need for seeking solutions to the problems and moving towards some international standardization was mentioned at United Nations as long ago as 1953; later, resolutions 715A(XXVII) and 929(XXXV) of the Economic and Social Council marked two important steps in recognition which led to the convening of the first world conference devoted exclusively to the subject at Geneva in 1967.
5. The Conference has carefully and fully considered what the next goals should be and how to achieve them and has embodied its views in a series of resolutions. In order to ensure the implementation of these resolutions and the maintenance of the momentum in international co-operation achieved in this Conference it is necessary to create a United Nations Permanent Commission on Geographical Names.

6. The Commission should consist of:
 - (a) a Body of Experts on geographical name standardization;
 - (b) a Secretariat.
7. The principal functions of the proposed Commission would be:
 - (a) the collection of information on their work from national and international bodies dealing with the standardization of geographical names;
 - (b) the collection and review of gazetteers, topographical glossaries, technical instructions on toponymic work, etc.;
 - (c) the dissemination of information compiled from (a) and (b) to Member States and Agencies, perhaps by way of periodical bulletins;
 - (d) consultation with Member States having practical experience of specific problems (e.g. the application of Automatic Data Processing to work on geographical names). Working Groups to include representatives of such states might be formed to deal with such matters;
 - (e) the working-out of principles and methods for solving the various problems of international standardization (e.g. definitions of geographic terms, transfers between writing systems, treatment of names of international geographical features (e.g. oceanic), national standardization systems);
 - (f) scientific and technical aid and advice to developing countries in organizing and operating national names authorities. The Commission might act as a clearing house for bilateral aid agreements covering such things as provision of experts, literature or fellowships.
 - (g) certain tasks connected with proposed UN or other Regional and International Conferences.
8. Suitable experts are already available in the national names authorities of several nations and it is proposed that initially an ad hoc Body of Experts be named by nations willing to provide the services of their representatives.

9. The permanent Body of Experts should include representatives of each of the major world linguistic/geographic groups. The final composition of such groups requires some study which should be the first priority task of the ad hoc Body of Experts. A suggested grouping is as follows:

Anglo-American	East Central and South-East Europe	South-East Asia
Latin American	USSR	East Asia
UK-Australia-New Zealand	Arabic group	Africa south of the Sahara
German-Dutch	South-West Asia other than Arabic	
Norden		
Romance-language Europe	Indian group	

10. Countries which consider that they belong to a given region should agree among themselves as to which country will provide an expert to represent the region.

11. It is thought that initially the Body of Experts might meet once a year. It would be necessary for the travelling expenses of each expert to be financed by his own organization or government.

12. The existing Cartography Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations has already provided the Secretariat for this first UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and all the necessary work preceding this Conference. It is recommended that this arrangement should continue until, in the light of working experience, the ad hoc Body of Experts shall advise the UN on the number and prerequisites of the secretarial staff which might be needed for the efficient servicing of the UN Permanent Commission on the standardization of geographical names. At the present stage it is foreseen that the professional staff would require a background of geographical training, preferably combined with specializations in cartography and/or linguistics. A suitable director would need to possess organizational ability and a personality suitable for technical discussions."

The draft Resolution was discussed, amended and adopted as Resolution 1 of the Conference.

II. Exchanges of Information and Bibliography

Possible methods of collection and distribution of relevant written material such as gazetteers, glossaries, maps, technical instructions, professional papers, reports, etc., were considered. Representatives of Ghana, Libya, Netherlands, United Kingdom and PAIGH contributed to the discussion.

It was agreed that it was desirable for the Cartography Section of the United Nations to continue to perform this function until the Permanent Commission proposed in the Resolution under sub-item 1 above should be able to do so.

Attention was drawn to the possibility of existing UN Regional organizations such as ECA and ECAFE being able to act as clearing centres.

Liaison with other international organizations having an interest in geographical names (such as IHB, IUGG, IGU, ICA, PAIGH, ICOS etc.) was considered to be important. The delegate of the Holy See mentioned the Study Centre of Religious Toponymy of Vatican City directed by Prof. Imbrighi, which proposes to publish a bulletin containing articles and bibliographies and which places its present resources at the disposal of Member States.

The Working Group formed to draft the previous Resolution was also charged with drafting a Resolution on this sub-item.

The draft Resolution was discussed and adopted as Resolution No. 5 of the Conference.

III. Technical Assistance

The Committee agreed, with a minimum of discussion, that the process of national standardization of geographical names in many developing countries would benefit from technical aid given by other countries with longer experience or more resources. The aid might be arranged through bilateral agreements or given by UN. Countries seeking such aid should make application to the United Nations. Aid might take the form of supplying expert personnel and/or technical documents, or arranging fellowships for training or study of the work of national names authorities.

A Working Group, with members drawn from Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Spain was formed to draft a suitable Resolution.

The draft Resolution was discussed and adopted as Resolution 6 of the Conference.

IV. Regional Meetings

The Committee was agreed that Regional Meetings were, in principle, desirable, but there was lengthy discussion on how to define a region, in which the principal speakers were the delegates of Ghana, Kenya, Netherlands, United Kingdom, USSR and PAIGH.

Some existing regional organizations were mentioned. UN and ECA in Africa and ECAFE in Asia. PAIGH functioned in America. The German-language countries had a permanent committee on geographical names and the Scandinavian countries had had some meetings. A joint meeting of these two groups and the Dutch language group has been arranged for March 1968 in Copenhagen. The Arab League was cited as a desirable Regional Group.

Division into regions based on writing systems was not thought to be a suitable proposal. Dr. Burrill thought that suitable regions could be defined by the geographical extent of particular problems. However, the consensus of opinion was in favour of division by linguistic/geographic units; the proposed Permanent Commission could study this problem and make proposals.

The Working Group formed for item 3 drafted a Resolution on this subject. The draft Resolution was discussed and adopted as Resolution 7 of the Conference.

V. Names of features extending beyond a single sovereignty

The Committee first considered the particular case of names in the oceans and international waters where maps or charts produced by several different agencies may each show a different name for the same feature. The extent of features may also be understood differently by different authorities, and the generic terms used to describe undersea features are also variable.

The observer from IHB reported that the names on the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) series of 24 charts at scale 1 : 10,000,000 had been examined by the Matsuzaki committee which had recommended standard names (spelt in the French system) for all major features. The recommendations were based on replies from 32 nations out of 64 members of IHB or IAPO to whom the questionnaires had been sent. Dr. Burrill commented that the U.S.A. does not convert English or conventional English names into French, as the GEBCO Committee does; in names taken from other languages, the specific part is accepted but an English generic is substituted, e.g. Gora, Baranov would become Baranov Seamount.

According to the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea, the waters covering the continental shelf from the outer limit of territorial waters (usually 3, 6 or 12 miles from shore) to the 200 metre isobath remain international waters. However, it is not unlikely that any nation exercising its right to engage in commercial exploitation of the natural resources of the Continental shelf seaward of its territorial waters will become de facto the creator and custodian of names within the area.

Delegates representing Netherlands, UK, USA, USSR and SCAR contributed to the discussion.

It was agreed that the proposed Permanent Commission should consider work already done by various international bodies such as IHB, IOC and IAPO on the standardization of names in international waters and the preparation of a standard glossary of marine physiography, and take various further steps.

A Working Group, with members drawn from Australia, Norway, UK, USSR and the IHB was formed to draft a suitable Resolution.

The Committee also considered non-oceanic features, the principal speakers being the representatives of Austria, Federal Republic of Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Mexico, Netherlands, UK, USA and USSR. The Antarctic was mentioned as an area of multiple naming and of uncertain limits of features usually due to delays in publication of maps of newly-explored areas. The members of SCAR were trying to remove duplications. The River Danube is a well-known case of multiple naming; it has at least seven different names in different languages. In German usage it is always Donau, in English usage Danube; but what form should be used by, for example, the UN which has no existing conventional usage?

Dr. Burrill drew attention to paper E/CONF.53/L.75, Resolution 11 of the 1962 Bonn Conference on the IMW (Report Vol. 1, pp. 105-6) which recommended that names of international features shall be in accordance with the usage of the publishing country. This solves the problem for a national agency which already has a usage, but not for an international or other agency which has not. The use of an international language, such as Esperanto, was not favoured by the Committee, nor was a proposal to number features on the map, referenced to a marginal list of alternative names. Bilingual maps had not been very successful.

It was thought that Regional or Sub-Regional Conferences or Commissions might whenever practicable be able to produce single standard names for international use for features extending beyond a single sovereignty; an international commission might then be able to follow the example of the IHB and produce a standard list of all names on a small-scale world map (1 : 10,000,000, or 1 : 5,000,000 or 1 : 2,500,000). The Chairman suggested that this problem be considered by the proposed Permanent Commission and the Committee so agreed.

The draft Resolution was discussed, amended and adopted as Resolution 8 of the Conference.

VI. Steps towards international standardization

This item was transferred to a plenary session of the whole Conference.

This Report was adopted unanimously by the Committee.

The Chairman announced that any communications with the ad hoc Group of Experts should be addressed to:

Cartography Section,
Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
Box 20, United Nations,
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017.