

PROVISIONAL: FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

Distr.
RESTRICTED

19 September 1967

Original: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 18 September 1967, at 10.20 a.m.

<u>President:</u>	Mr. BURRILL	United States of America
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. GOMEZ DE SILVA	Mexico
<u>Executive Secretary:</u>	Mr. URETA	
<u>Deputy Executive Secretary:</u>	Mr. CHRISTOPHER	

CONTENTS:

Report on credentials (agenda item 4)

Reports by Governments on the progress made in the standardization of
geographical names (agenda item 7) (continued)

N.B. Participants wishing to have corrections to this provisional summary record incorporated in the final summary record of the meeting are requested to submit them in writing, preferably on a copy of the record itself, to the Official Records Editing Section, United Nations Secretariat, Room 443, Palais des Nations, Geneva, within two working days of receiving the provisional record in their working language.

E/CONF.53/SR.7

GE.67-18951

REPORT ON CREDENTIALS

The PRESIDENT said that, since Mr. Coker (Nigeria), who had been elected Second Vice-President (E/CONF.53/SR.1, page 5), had not been able to attend the Conference, the Credentials Committee had only four members instead of the five prescribed by rule 3 of the rules of procedure (ibid., pp. 3 - 4). The simplest course of action open to the Conference would be to amend rules 6 and 3 of the rules of procedures relating respectively to the election of Vice-Presidents and the composition of the Credentials Committee.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom), supported by Mr. GALL (Guatemala), proposed that rule 3 should be amended to provide for a Credentials Committee of four instead of five members, and rule 6 to provide for one Vice-President instead of two.

The proposal was adopted unanimously.

The PRESIDENT announced that, except in one case, the Credentials Committee had examined the credentials of all the representatives and had found them in order. He understood that the credentials of the representative of Senegal, who had just arrived, had been submitted but not yet examined. When they had been examined, the representative's name would be added to the official list of representatives.

REPORTS BY GOVERNMENTS ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES (agenda item 7) (E/CONF.53/L.3, L.6, L.9, L.12, L.13, L.17, L.21, L.22, L.23, L.25, L.35, L.40, L.42, L.44, L.45, L.46, L.65, L.68, L.70, L.71, L.74) (continued)

Mr. COHEN (Bulgaria) said that in his country geographical names were the concern, under the Academy of Sciences, of the Bulgarian Language Institute and the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography. The Institute had for some years been engaged in a thorough study of Bulgarian toponymy and the problems involved in transcribing foreign geographical names. The Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography had for many years been preparing maps of Bulgaria and transcribing foreign geographical names, mainly for small-scale maps. The Bulgarian Council for Orthography and Transcription of Geographical Names, established in 1964, was responsible to the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography, whose decisions were binding on all Bulgarian institutions. To ensure that standard forms were used by communication media, the Council issued lists of transcribed foreign geographical names and correct spellings of Bulgarian names. Its transcriptions were based, to the extent that Bulgarian grammar and pronunciation permitted, on accurate phonetic representation of the pronunciation officially recognized and most widely used in the country concerned. In the past two-and-a-half years the Council had published E/CONF.53/SR.7

eleven lists of transcribed European and American geographical names. It had clarified the principles of transcription and dealt with a wide range of subjects, including transcription from languages belonging to different linguistic families.

Accurate transcription of foreign geographical names required constant contact between countries, in the form of exchanges of information on national toponymy and exchanges of experience at symposia; it also required a critical appraisal of transcription in other countries, and the publication of periodicals dealing with the theoretical problems involved. He fully supported the view of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names that regional conferences on the subject should be convened from time to time (E/CONF.53/L.1, para. 9). United Nations action could be of great assistance to national bodies concerned with the standardization of geographical names.

Mr. APONTE (Venezuela) said that - as pointed out in his Government's report (E/CONF.53/L.45) - Venezuela by reason of its geographical position, had a varied toponymy derived from the many different tribes and peoples who had settled in its territory or on its borders. The standardization of geographical names required research by linguists and historians.

A cartographic programme was being carried out in Venezuela, and in conjunction with it a list of geographical names was being compiled. Maps on the scale of 1:25,000, covering 5 minutes latitude by 7.5 minutes longitude, were being prepared and were being scaled down to 1:100,000 sheets covering 20 minutes latitude by 30 minutes longitude. The competent Section of the Directorate of National Cartography had since 1960 converted 4,800 aerial photographs to maps on the scale of 1:60,000, 1:50,000 or 1:25,000 and had also prepared maps of forty-five urban areas using standard symbols provided for in cartographic manuals. The more important urban areas had been selected for special study. In rural areas information was being obtained from local inhabitants, who accompanied official teams in the field. A new Section on Geographical Names had been established and was preparing toponymic maps, gazeteers and glossaries.

Mr. GALLES (Luxembourg) said that for the past fifteen years the Toponymy Board (Commission de Toponymie) had been working on the standardization of geographical names for a series of 1:25,000 scale maps of Luxembourg. The Board tried to observe the principles of the spoken language but also sought to avoid changing name-forms already adopted in other countries. Place-name spellings were based on forms appearing in historical documents in French, while the names of topographical features were transcribed into a form which corresponded as closely as possible to local pronunciation. The phonetic writing system used, though ideal for linguistic purposes, was ill suited to cartographic needs.

Mr. TARAJSKI (Poland) said that since the war a great deal of work had been done on the restoration of former Polish geographical names, especially in the western and northern parts of the country. The results of that work were contained in a two-volume publication recently issued by a special commission of leading linguists and geographers established for that purpose. The geographical names proposed had subsequently been officially approved for general use. A detailed study by Professor Kondracki on the division of the country into physical geographical regions included a list of proposed regional names; most had been adopted, although some were still under discussion. Another recent work, by Professor Zwolinski, dealt with the hydronymy of the Vistula basin, which covered three-quarters of the country. Most of the work on geographical names was done by field teams under the auspices of the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography. Large-scale maps had been prepared for the entire country, and the names of nearly all places had been approved in an official form. General geographical gazetteers were drawn up by a special administrative department.

The Commission on Geographical Names, established in the Geographical Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1952, had worked out some general principles for the transcription of foreign geographical names. The gazetteer published by the Commission contained nearly 20,000 names giving Polish spellings alongside officially recognized forms, an indication of the system used for transcribing geographical names from languages with non-Roman writing systems, and a glossary of common geographical terms. Work was in progress on a world atlas.

Mr. ROUBIK (Czechoslovakia) said that cartographers and geographers had been working on the standardization of geographical names in his country for some decades and that a gazetteer had recently been issued giving the geographically and philologically correct forms of all names of inhabited localities in Czechoslovakia. Any name changes were decided by the competent authorities jointly with a special commission of cartographical, geographical and philological experts. A Terminology Commission, established under the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography and composed of representatives from Government departments and academic institutions together with specialists in history, geography and philology, dealt with any problems arising in connexion with geographical names in Czechoslovakia and with the transcription of foreign geographical names. Each administrative area had its own terminology commission. The work of the area commissions was supervised by the central Terminology Commission, which had issued an instruction manual on the subject. The Commission's gazetteers, when approved by the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography, were used for the preparation of maps in the Czech and Slovak languages.

The PRESIDENT, recalling what he had said at the first meeting about the long and difficult task confronting the Conference (E/CONF.53/SR.1, page 4), said that, in his opinion, a considerable amount of progress had been made in identifying and understanding the problems involved in the standardization of geographical names. The discussions in progress were showing participants where differences of opinion still existed and - he hoped - the reasons why they existed. It would be unrealistic to expect solutions to be found for all those problems before the end of the Conference, but it might be possible to determine what action should be taken in the future to solve those still outstanding.

The real aim of the Conference was to achieve universal co-operation on the standardization of geographical names. It had no power to force any country to do anything; its only strength lay in reasonableness and in persuasion. It was natural, when choosing between alternatives, that every participant should consider what would best meet the interests of the country he represented, but the good of the whole world community should also be borne in mind. It was for each participant to decide whether to adopt a national or an international position on any matter; a participant's reasons for taking a particular position might remain unknown to others, but it should be assumed that his motives were good. In that connexion he

had been gratified to note that at previous meetings all participants, even when putting forward conflicting views, had endeavoured to make a constructive contribution.

Since, as he had said, not all the problems could be covered during the Conference, attention should now be focussed on those points upon which agreement could be reached. If the Conference made recommendations which could not be implemented, co-operation would not be advanced. He suggested that the Conference might agree not to adopt any resolution which would have the effect of trying to make any country do what it was unable or unprepared to do.

It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.