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STATEMENT BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE
UNITED KINGDOM CONCERNING THE ROMANIZATION OF CHINESE

It is a matter of great regret that the positive approach taken by the United States and the United Kingdom aiming at a unanimous resolution on Pinyin should have been rejected by so many delegates with so little consideration of its benefits.

It was conceded by China that those countries with long-established and deeply entrenched commitment to Wade-Giles (be it in maps and gazetteers or in more general reference works) would face a difficult period of transition. It was admitted by China that they themselves are in a state of transition: the delegate of China referred to the continuing use of Wade-Giles in China which it was hoped to phase out in the near future. (These uses were not specified but it is evident for everyone to see that the names of Chinese post and telegraph offices given in international listings published by the UPU in 1968 and the ITU in 1976 still use non-Pinyin spellings).

But a more serious problem arising during the transition period concerns the use of Pinyin material as a source for names. The following are offered as examples of the sort of problem that will face the linguistically objective cartographer:

1. Pinyin sources are two only: the 1:6,000,000 map of 1974 bearing 3,750 names and the 1977 atlas with plates at various scales carrying some 21,000 names. But many Han-character maps and atlases of China at scales of down to 1:2,000,000 are available of recent date, and all ancillary geographical material is published in Han characters only. This means that many thousands of names are available in Han characters only. One might suppose that this could be overcome by the simple process of applying the Pinyin system as a transcription system. But
2. Nearly half the land area of China involves the three principal minority languages: Uighur, Tibetan and Mongol. The rules for the transliteration/"pinyinization" of names from these languages have been translated in part in document E/CONF.69/L.119 (the green booklet distributed with the Atlas is the original). It must be emphasized that these rules are inapplicable without the original Tibetan-, Uighur- and Mongol-script forms of the names. Since no current sources in these languages

are available to cartographers outside China, it follows that it is impossible to work out Pinyin spellings of any place names in northern and western China that do not occur on the two small-scale Pinyin maps referred to above. This extraordinary limitation may not be of concern to publishers of small-scale maps but it is an insuperable obstacle in other cases (for example, the International Map of the World on the Millionth Scale published under the aegis of the United Nations). It will naturally take some years for China to prepare Pinyin maps and gazeteers at this scale.

It is self-evident that in the face of the present inadequate number of Pinyin names available, and considering also the insoluble problem of minority names, the United States and the United Kingdom cannot accept Pinyin for exclusive use at this stage, since their own gazeteers of China (freely available in the western world) contain tens of thousands of names in northern and western China which, for the reasons given above, cannot be converted to Pinyin. It would be an extraordinary concept for geographers to accept - that these tens of thousands of places may no longer be referred to; for that would be the practical consequence if the resolution proposed in Committee IV were adopted.

There is a further aspect of this difficult problem which is of direct concern to the members of the Conference in their capacity as spokesmen for standardization of geographical names. As early as the middle sixties some European maps of China (notably the Hungarian-Swedish coproduction constantly held up to us as an example at the London Conference and referred to again here in Athens) had introduced Pinyin. Such publications spelled Pinyin in a bewildering variety of forms: with tonal diacritics/without tonal diacritics/solid as one word/spelled out in syllables, variously capitalized and non-capitalized. In northern and western China these maps transcribed the Han-character form of minority names into Pinyin. By 1975, with the presentation of the 1:6,000,000 Pinyin map by the Chinese experts to the sixth session of the Group of Experts, it became clear that such minority language names had their own specific forms, derived not from Han characters but from local scripts. Some Pinyin maps produced in the west were revised to agree with the new Pinyin spellings. Unhappily no caution was printed on the 1:6000,000 map that the system used for minority names was only provisional. The 1977 Atlas just distributed spells its Tibetan and Mongol names in accordance with the revised rules of 1976. Something in the order of 50 per cent of the Tibetan and Mongol names are differently spelled in the 1977 Atlas as compared with the 1974 map. The practical consequence of this hasty and critically uncontrolled adoption of Pinyin is that there already exist three different Pinyin spellings for some hundreds of names; for example (in Tibet):

Jiangzi	-	Gyaze	-	Gyangzê
Changdu	-	Qabdo	-	Qamdo
Ritu	-	Ruto	-	Rutog
Qushui	-	Quxur	-	Qixü

These examples make a poor advertisement for a group of standardization experts, whose job might reasonably be supposed to be to recommend systems that will work efficiently.

It was fortunate for the experts that precipitate action on a resolution to adopt Pinyin failed to gain support at the London Conference. It is equally important that precipitate action be avoided in the new circumstances as they confront the present Conference in Athens.

The problems of the "period of transition" are not to be dismissed as lightly as they were in the debate in Committee IV. They are crucial to the matter of a workable nomenclature for China in the coming years. It is evident from what has been said above that existing Wade-Giles spellings must inevitably play some part in this transitional nomenclature. (To claim that Wade-Giles cannot be singled out as a "necessary aid" in the transitional period, since other European languages would then have to be similarly treated, fails to recognize that no other language community offered its aid in this respect, for no maps and gazetteers in other languages exist that are comparable to those in Wade-Giles).

All the problems discussed on pages 1-2 above, and no doubt many others that have not yet been foreseen, can be solved and will be solved. The United States and the United Kingdom would like to think that they can be solved by moving ahead together unanimously. That was the spirit of the revised resolution agreed by the Chairman and the Chinese delegation. We earnestly hope that it may be reconsidered for unanimous adoption.

But even if it should unhappily prove to be the case that the United States and the United Kingdom are unable to support an unqualified resolution for the adoption of Pinyin to the exclusion of the auxiliary use of Wade-Giles, they will of course continue to examine the problems of transition in detail and undertake to keep the United Nations Group of Experts fully informed of their findings, in the hope that a wholly workable solution may eventually be found and approved with no dissenting voice.