

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS-^{1/}GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AT ITS FOURTH SESSION

(Held at Church House, London, England
on 9 May and 1 June 1972)

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was invited by the Secretary-General in pursuance to Economic and Social Council resolution 314(XLIV) to convene its Fourth Session at Church House, London, England, on 9 May 1972, prior to the second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and to meet again on 1 June 1972 to review the results of the Conference. In its meeting of 9 May the Group considered the reports of the four working groups which were to be presented before the Conference.

Attendance

2. The Session was attended by 27 experts from 20 countries representing all of the 14 geographical/linguistic divisions of the world.^{2/}
3. Mr. Chris N. Christopher, Chief of the Cartography Section, served in the capacity of Secretary for the Group.

Opening of the Session

4. The Session was opened by the Chairman of the Group of Experts.
5. The Group agreed to follow the same rules of procedure as in the previous sessions.
6. The Group adopted the following agenda:
 1. Reports of the working groups
 2. Organization of the Conference
 3. Election of Officers
 4. Proposal on gazetteers
 5. Programme of the Group of Experts
 6. Fifth Session of the Group of Experts

^{1/} In accordance with resolution 3 of the second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

^{2/} See Annex

Reports of the Working Groups

7. The Chairmen of the working groups reported on the work accomplished since the Third Session and submitted before the Group of Experts the draft reports to the Conference. In order to expedite the meeting the working groups had already adopted their reports thus permitting the Conference to very quickly acknowledge adoption of these draft reports.

Organization of the Conference

8. Mr. Christopher was asked to briefly summarize the tentative schedule of the Conference and Mr. Komkov emphasized that the Chairman of the Group should report the activities of the Group of Experts following the national and divisional reports. The Chairman agreed to do this. It was also agreed that the Group would meet informally during the last week of the Conference to consider items 3 to 6 of the agenda for the Fourth Session which would be considered on 1 June.

9. The Executive Secretary of the Conference said that in order to help the Conference in its preparation of committee reports as well as draft resolutions, etc., an Editorial Committee would be appointed consisting primarily of members from the Group of Experts, as well as other interested participants of the Conference. It was also agreed that Mr. Christopher, the Executive Secretary of the Conference, in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Conference and Chairman of the Group of Experts would make the necessary appointments to the membership of the Editorial Committee if volunteers were lacking.

10. With regard to the election of officers for the Conference and on the basis of allowing for a wide geographical distribution, it was agreed that the 15 officers of the five technical committees would be elected with due regard to divisional representation. It was also agreed that it would be beneficial to have one technical committee having officers representing Spanish language areas.

Election of Officers

11. The Fourth Session was resumed on 1 June and Mr. Sharma proposed that the present officers of the Group should continue in office until the next conference. This proposal was seconded by Mr. Gall and unanimously adopted by the Group.

Proposal on Gazetteers

12. The Chairman on the basis of the results of the Conference quickly pointed out that a romanization system is adequate if it is accepted by both the donor and the user. He noted that many countries were not in any position to romanize all the names, and furthermore that even if single systems were adopted and used this would not guarantee uniformity of names. He said that an obvious answer would be to retain files of standard names readily available and kept up to date by supplements and revisions. The gazetteers published by the Board on Geographical Names, United States of America, cover the entire world, contain some four million names and to date have been found to satisfy most requirements not associated with large scale mapping. These gazetteers provide the best possible names to the most people both effectively and economically. He suggested to the Group of Experts that they consider that the Board of Geographical Names gazetteers be converted into United Nations gazetteers or gazetteers of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, maintained by the Board of Geographical Names and the countries covered co-operatively. The gazetteers would be monitored by a group appointed by the Group of Experts to permit conformance to agreed standards. He asked that this matter be carefully considered and discussed during the Fifth Session. Mr. Breu and Mr. Komkov both agreed that this proposal may be a useful solution and could lead to an enormous achievement provided all the countries concerned would approve of these gazetteers and then they may be placed under the auspices of the United Nations. The Chairman said that the major cost concerning these gazetteers would already have been written off and only the cost of revision would have to be met. The Group agreed that this item should be added to the agenda for the next session.

Programme for the Group of Experts

13. On the basis of the Conference results it was suggested that the Group should review and be prepared to discuss and consider at its next session its aims, functions and modus operandi.

14. Mr. Loxton reported that agreement was reached amongst the African participants in the Group of Experts to divide the fourteenth division, Africa, South of the Sahara, into an eastern and western part. Mr. Coker (Nigeria) was designated the expert of the western part. The exact titles for the new divisions, in this case 14 and 15, would be submitted at the next session.

15. It was decided that the four existing working groups should continue their work under their present chairmen. These working groups would be expected to report to the Fifth Session.

16. The Working Group on Definitions was expanded to include Mr. Hakulinen (Finland), Mr. Nédélec (France), Mr. Gall (Guatemala), Mr. Földi (Hungary), Mr. Lapesa (Spain), Mr. Vazquez-Maure (Spain) and Mr. Dahlstedt (Sweden). This working group would continue the work on revising and adding to the report submitted to the second Conference. ^{3/}

17. The Working Group on a Single Romanization System would continue its work on non-Roman writing systems which the Conference was unable to adopt and will continue to review the experiences and results of the application of the romanization systems already adopted. Mr. Földi and Mr. Dahlstedt joined this working group. Mr. Orneling volunteered to prepare a report on the financial consequences of diacritical marks contained in the various romanization systems. It was also suggested that the divisions should consider the acceptability of certain romanization systems in their countries and report on this matter at the next meeting of the Group of Experts.

18. The Working Group on Extraterrestrial Topographic Features was asked to continue its work and give special attention to resolution 21 of the Conference entitled "Standardization of names of extraterrestrial topographic features". Mr. Rado, Mr. Sharma and Mr. Vazquez-Maure joined this working group.

19. The Working Group on Names of Undersea Features was renamed to read "Working Group on Names of Undersea and Maritime Features". This working group was asked to pay special attention to resolutions 22 "Standardization of maritime nomenclature", 23, "Names of Antarctic and Undersea Features" and 26 "Standardization of names of undersea features beyond a single sovereignty". The Chairman agreed to prepare a model for name proposal, in accordance with resolution 23, similar to that published in the gazetteer of undersea features by the Board on Geographical Names.

^{3/} See Annex V of this report.

Training Courses

20. The Group was informed by Mr. Ormeling that in accordance with resolution 18, "Technical training of personnel", the draft programme for the training course which is expected in Enschede, Netherlands, during the late Summer 1974 will be presented for discussion at the next session.
21. The Group asked Mr. Page to prepare a paper on the term "minority language" and to distribute this paper to the Group of Experts prior to its next session in order to allow time for serious consideration and discussion.
22. Mr. Lewis on the basis of resolution 11 entitled "Transliteration into Roman and Devanāgarī of the languages of the Indian Group", said that the Directorate of the Military Survey of the United Kingdom was prepared to make available 6,000 copies of the romanization guide by Mr. Sharma in order to have it distributed as an annex to Volume 2 of the report of the Conference. Mr. Lewis also suggested that the system used for the Indian group of languages should be used in the next edition of the Board of Geographical Names Romanization Guide.
23. It was decided that the divisions should carefully study the application of the applicability of resolution 29 "Exonyms" and report their conclusions at the Fifth Session.
24. In order to implement resolution 33 "International co-operation in the standardization of geographical names" the Chairman was asked to contact the Universal Postal Union, International Telecommunications Union, and the International Union of Tourist Organizations on the matter of international names standardization. With regard to the naming of features beyond a single sovereignty the Group agreed that each division should undertake the preparation of reports in accordance with resolutions 24 "Standardization of names beyond a single sovereignty", 25 "Names of features beyond a single sovereignty" and 34 "International standardization of names beyond a single sovereignty" and submit these to the Cartography Section, United Nations, before 1 January 1973. The United Nations Secretariat should be in contact with other United Nations bodies in respect of resolutions 21 and 24.
25. Mr. Meynen was asked to continue his work on the bibliography and was commended on all the work he had done to date.

26. The Chairman also asked members that where their delegations had to report on the Conference to their respective governments to send copies of these reports to all the divisions and the Cartography Section. Mr. Breu suggested that the same be done with the working papers of the four working groups. Mr. Komkov urged that the United Nations ask all Member Governments to send whatever information is available on names standardization to the Cartography Section with a view to distribute this information to the Group of Experts.

Fifth Session of the Group of Experts

27. The Group agreed to hold its Fifth Session in 1973 and the Sixth Session not before 1975. The majority of the experts preferred that the Fifth Session be held at the end of August or the beginning of September but as an alternative they did agree that if the United Nations had no meeting and interpretation facilities available at that time then March 1973 would have to suffice.

LIST OF EXPERTS^{1/}

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA

Division Chairman: M. F. Burrill (USA)
M. B. Smart (Canada)
C. Page (USA)

LATIN AMERICA

F. Gall (Guatemala)

UNITED KINGDOM GROUP

Division Chairman: H.A.G. Lewis (UK)
P.J.M. Geelan (UK)

DUTCH AND GERMAN SPEAKING GROUP

Division Chairman: E. Heynen (Federal Republic of Germany)
J. Breu (Austria)
D. Blok (Netherlands)
P.J. Ormeling (Netherlands)

NORDEN

P. Hovda (Norway)

ROMANCE LANGUAGES (OTHER THAN LATIN AMERICA)

Division Chairman: F. Nédélec (France)
J. Corderas Descárrega (Spain)
R. Laposa Melgar (Spain)

EUROPE, EAST-CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EAST

Division Chairman: S. Radó (Hungary)
E. Földi (Hungary)

USSR

A.M. Komkov (USSR)

ARABIC

M.Z. Al-Ayubi (Lebanon)

ASIA, SOUTH-WEST (OTHER THAN ARABIC)

K. Vadiie (Iran)

INDIAN GROUP

D.N. Sharma Atri Harnal (India)

ASIA, SOUTH-EAST

Division Chairman: B. Khamasundara (Thailand)
C. Chhiet (Khmer Republic)

ASIA, EAST

R. Nagaoka (Japan)
S. Maruyama (Japan)

AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA

Division West: R. Oluwole Coker (Nigeria)
J. Loxton (Kenya)
W.J. Absaloms (Kenya)