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Concluding remarks  
at the end of the Sixth United Nations Conference  
on the Standardization of Geographical Names  
New York, 3 September 1992

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Delegates,

At the conclusion of the Conference, allow me to share with you some impressions about these memorable two weeks during which my colleagues and I had the honor and the pleasure to assist you in your important tasks.

I shall not attempt to assess the outcome of the Sixth Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. First, because you yourself, Mr. President, have done it so brilliantly. Second, because the real results of the meeting will be reflected only through the implementation of its resolutions and recommendations. We do count, in this regard, on your continued commitment.

Yet, Mr. President, allow me to make some brief remarks.

First, I would like to say that the Conference has demonstrated an increasing relevance of its subject-matter in our modern world. One could see it through the increased participation of Member-States, through the vivacity of your dialogue, but also, through a genuine public interest for the Conference. Maybe the visibility of the geographical names is still not as high as we would like it to be, but it seems to be growing and it might well continue to grow. In this respect I cannot but fully agree with a view expressed in your debate that geographical names are not an aim in themselves, but rather an indispensable tool of economic and social development. Yes, your work is indeed about facilitating communication, about overcoming cultural, linguistic and technical obstacles. And the support for your activities, both at the national and at the international level will probably be proportionate to the perception of its relevance to those whom we might call "the end users" of geographical names.

Second, your deliberations, though most often of a highly technical nature, have also indirectly touched upon some delicate political issues. It was rewarding and encouraging to note that such issues have not disrupted the seriousness of your deliberations and the very constructive overall atmosphere of the

Conference. The merit goes to all of you and to your deep commitment to common objectives. Yet, this is also, no doubt, another manifestation of the new, post-cold war era of openness and international understanding and of the increasing role of the United Nations in that context.

Third, I think that the Conference will significantly reinforce the interrelationship between your national and regional activities on the one hand, and our own activities on geographical names and cartography, here, at the United Nations. The implementation of your decisions and recommendations will rely primarily on your national geographical names authorities. The Department of Economic and Social Development will continue to be your reliable partner, not only in providing secretariat support services to future conferences and to the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names, but also, within available resources, in supporting new educational, scientific and other relevant cooperation projects that you might wish to initiate in this field.

Finally, Mr. President, let me say, on behalf of my colleagues from the Secretariat and on my own behalf, that it was a gratifying experience to work with you, to be guided by your wisdom and to cooperate with your dedicated collaborators from the Bureau and with all of you, distinguished delegates and friends.

Let me finish, Mr. President, by quoting your own "sound-bite": you were right indeed when you said that our Conference was a real "dialogue among civilisations".

I hope you have enjoyed your work in the United Nations Headquarters and your stay in New York. I wish to all of you a pleasant return trip to your capitals and I look forward to continuing our fruitful and very promising cooperation.

Thank you very much Mr. President