

**Group of Experts on
Geographical names**

**Twelfth Session
Geneva, 29 September - 7 October 1986**

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Agenda Item 13

**REVISION OF THE
MODUS OPERANDI OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
(Submitted by A. Rayburn, Canada)**

PREAMBLE

1. The Aims, Functions and Modus Operandi of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEKN) were adopted at the 2nd Session of UNGEKN in 1970, and modified at the 5th Session in 1973, at the 6th Session in 1975 and the 8th Session in 1979.
2. The premise from the beginning was that the objectives of UNGEKN could be best achieved through the grouping of UN member countries into either linguistic divisions or geographical divisions.
3. There have been instances where some positive results have been achieved through divisional association among member nations of the UN, examples being in the Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division, the Dutch and German-Speaking Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division and the Norden Division.
4. At least one sovereign state participates in UNGEKN as a single division, rendering the concept that UNGEKN should be composed of divisions, with two or more sovereign states in each, somewhat obsolete.
5. There are several situations where the divisional structure has not worked at all, especially in Africa and Asia. Many of the divisions have never bothered to select a chairman. Several times experts have spoken at UN sessions without indicating whether they are speaking on behalf of their divisions or of their countries only. Often it is never certain if an expert is speaking on behalf of his country or making only personal observations.

APPROVED MODUS OPERANDI

Modus operandi of the United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names

1. By Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968 and later decisions, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has been charged with providing for continuous co-ordination and liaison among countries to further the standardization of geographical names and to encourage the formation and the work of linguistic/geographical divisions.
2. In order to achieve the results required, at both the national and the international levels, as specified in the resolutions adopted at United Nations conferences, the linguistic/geographical divisions listed below were formed:

Africa Central Division Africa East Division Africa West Division Arabic Division Asia East Division (other than China) Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) China Division Dutch- and German-speaking Division	East Central and South-East Europe Division India Division Latin America Division Norden Division Romano-Hellenic Division Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Division United Kingdom Division United States of America-Canada Division
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3. *Membership of divisions*
 - (a) A country not already a member of a division will decide for itself to which division it wishes to belong;
 - (b) A country may also participate in the activities of divisions other than its own provided the nature of its participation is not such as to change the linguistic/geographical character of the division.
4. (a) The Group of Experts is composed of the national experts sent by countries members of the 17 divisions:
 - (b) Each division will select, by methods of its own choosing, an expert to represent the division as a whole at the meetings of the Group of Experts and to speak on divisional matters at the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names.
5. The divisional representative will be responsible for ensuring that the work of the Group of Experts and its potential for technical assistance are brought to the attention of the individual countries within his division and for reporting to the United Nations any special problems within his division.

PROPOSED REVISION OF THE
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Modus Operandi of
the United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names

Proposed by United States of America-Canada Division

1. By Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968 and later decisions, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has been charged with providing for continuous co-ordination and liaison among countries to further the standardization of geographical names and to promote the objectives of the Group of Experts through the association of countries with similar linguistic or cultural roots or with geographical links.
2. The Cartography Section of the Infrastructure Branch, Division of Natural Resources and Energy of the United Nations Secretariat, New York will provide for the Secretariat of the Group of Experts.
3. Governments of each member state of the United Nations may nominate one or more experts from the field of geographical name standardization to represent the state at Group of Experts meetings.
4. The names of the nominated experts should be notified to the Secretariat by the government of each member state in advance of any Group of Experts meeting.
5. Where a member state nominates two or more experts to participate in a meeting of the Group of Experts, the name of the head of each national delegation should be indicated.
6. The Group of Experts will elect the following officers: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Rapporteur.

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6. The divisional representative is expected to stimulate the standardization work within his division by all appropriate means, for example, correspondence (including correspondence with national surveying and mapping agencies), divisional meetings, preferably at least one every five years, etc.
7. In order to guarantee the continuity of the work, each division having more than one sovereign State should select an alternate representative; the divisional representative will act in close contact with his alternate.
8. Governments may appoint national experts to attend meetings of the Group of Experts on the understanding that the said national experts will have the right of voice and that their attendance will be co-ordinated with the expert who represents the division in question and who will vote on behalf of the division. The Group of Experts would welcome participation by countries that have not yet participated in conferences or Group of Experts sessions, especially when their language or script is to be considered.
9. The Group of Experts will elect the following officers: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Rapporteur.
10. The elections mentioned in paragraph 9 above will be held at the termination of the respective United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. The officers will serve until their successors are elected at the next conference. The Cartography Section of the United Nations Secretariat will provide the secretariat for the Group.
11. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman will assume the office of Chairman. In the absence of the Vice-Chairman or the Rapporteur, the Chairman will appoint persons to complete the unexpired portion of their terms of office.
12. The Group of Experts will meet in accordance with the precedents set by the Economic and Social Council.
13. Agreement on technical matters will be achieved by consensus and not by voting. Voting will be reserved for matters solely of a procedural character.
14. Questions implicating national sovereignty outside the scope of standardization of geographical names are excluded from discussion in the Group.

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7. The elections mentioned in paragraph 6 above will be held at the termination of the respective United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. The officers will serve until their successors are elected at the next conference.
8. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman will assume the office of Chairman. In the absence of the Vice-Chairman or the Rapporteur, the Chairman will appoint persons to complete the unexpired portion of their terms of office.
9. The Group of Experts will meet in accordance with the precedents set by the Economic and Social Council.
10. Agreement on technical matters will be achieved by consensus and not by voting. Voting by the head of each national delegation will be reserved for matters solely of a procedural character.
11. Questions implicating national sovereignty outside the scope of standardization of geographical names are excluded from discussion in the Group.
12. Persons with special knowledge of particular aspects of the standardization of geographical names may be invited to place before the Group of Experts their specialized knowledge.
13. During the meetings of the Group of Experts, special working groups may be appointed to deal with particular issues. Upon completion of the appointed task, the working group will be automatically disbanded unless especially directed to remain in being.
14. Working groups of specialists may be formed by the Group of Experts under the chairmanship of one of the national experts to study particular problems between meetings of the Group of Experts.

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15. Persons with special knowledge of particular aspects of the standardization of geographical names may be invited to place before the Group of Experts their specialized knowledge.
16. During the meetings of the Group of Experts, special working groups may be appointed to deal with particular issues. Upon completion of the appointed task, the working group will be automatically disbanded unless especially directed to remain in being.
17. Working groups of specialists may be formed by the Group of Experts under the chairmanship of one of the national experts referred to in paragraph 8 above to study particular problems between meetings of the Group of Experts.
18. In preparation of the meetings of the Group of Experts the Chairman can ask for special papers on particular topics.
19. The working languages of the United Nations selected for the conduct of business during the meetings of the Group of Experts will depend upon the nature of the representation and the facilities available at the time.
20. The Group of Experts will maintain communication among themselves. The Chairman will be responsible for communicating the results of their main activities to the Cartography Section of the United Nations Secretariat and to the members and officers of the Group.
21. Apart from communication through formal channels, experts representing divisions and also national representatives will be notified by informal means of the transactions, programmes and requirements of the Group of Experts.
22. The Group of Experts will encourage countries to supply information and assistance to countries within or outside their respective divisions and also to the Cartography Section of the United Nations Secretariat.

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16. The working languages of the United Nations selected for the conduct of business during the meetings of the Group of Experts will depend upon the nature of the representation and the facilities available at the time.
17. The Chairman is responsible for communicating the results of the work of the Group of Experts to the Secretariat.
18. The Secretariat is responsible for communicating the work of the Group of Experts reported by the Chairman, and communicating other information, such as planned meetings of the Group and of meetings of related organizations, to the heads of national delegations and the Chairmen of working groups.
19. The heads of national delegations and the chairmen of working groups are responsible for communicating with the appointed experts serving on their respective delegations or working groups.
20. To achieve the standardisation of geographical names at the international level, it is strongly recommended that experts from member states with common linguistic, cultural or geographical links with members from other states should promote the goals of the Group of Experts through appropriate means, such as correspondence, meetings, publishing in surveying, mapping, toponymic and related journals, and cooperating with the work of organizations devoted to name study and name standardization.
21. Where member states do not nominate experts to participate in meetings of the Group of Experts, the heads of national delegations and the chairmen of working groups are encouraged to develop contacts with the appropriate names specialists in national mapping, surveying and toponymic agencies.