

**Group of Experts on
Geographical names**

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Agenda Item 16

OPINION

of the Tenth Regional Division on Working
Paper E/CONF.74/L.112/1982 introduced by
the United States of America

(Submitted by the East Central and South-East
Europe Division)

As early as the First UN conference on the standardization of geographical names (resolution 9) the task of developing a unified system for rendering names with Roman letters has been set. Since then there have been reports on this question at every session of the Group of Experts. Systems for rendering names with Roman letters have been created in many countries already. A great number of these systems, adopted by officially authorized institutions of different countries and subject to approval by the UN, have established themselves in the linguistic practice of the peoples.

For Bulgaria, where the transliteration with the Roman alphabet is made necessary by the fact that the Bulgarian language uses the Cyrillic characters, the norms for rendering Bulgarian characters with Roman ones were adopted by the UN at its Third conference in Athens in 1972. This system of Roman transliteration of Bulgarian orthography has already made its way into the linguistic reality of our country.

Document L112 submitted by the USA raises again the question of creating a unified system of Roman transliteration. It must be noted that this problem has been discussed on many occasions; without repeating the discussions which have so far taken place, it is our opinion that the systems for Roman transliteration which have been adopted by separate countries are in fact the most efficient.

We consider the adoption of the English language as a means of rendering geographical names from the whole world with a view to their uniformity and standardization as unfounded. We do not contest the fact that in recent years the English language has been finding an ever increasing application in the commu-

nication between the peoples. But we cannot accept that the English phonetics is suitable for rendering the phonetic peculiarities of the different languages, including Bulgarian.

On the same basis arguments could be found for adopting French, Spanish, etc. as a linguistic basis for international application.

Reviewing the already established norms for Roman transliteration in countries with non-Roman alphabets will cause a doubling of the systems for rendering geographical names with Roman characters, which in its turn will lead to a certain confusion.

In conclusion, the People's Republic of Bulgaria as chairman of the Tenth Regional Division having consulted the member countries of the group on document L112 voices the opinion that the adoption of the English language as an internationally applied means of rendering geographical names with Roman characters is not suitable on account of the considerations stated above.