

Agenda Item 10

Relevant resolutions of the Third United Nations
Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas
United Nations Headquarters, 19 Feb.- 1 March 1985

(presented by the Secretariat)

Excerpts from the Report of the 3rd UNRCC for the
Americas (document E/CONF. 77/3)

**VI. WORK OF COMMITTEE IV: REVIEW OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS
RELATED TO POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL MAPPING
AND CHARTING PROGRAMMES**

84. The Committee considered the questions of matters related to the establishment of national programmes, map specifications, geographical names, training and education and map and chart sales and distribution policies and practices under agenda item 8. The Committee reviewed 34 papers on those subjects and submitted 10 draft resolutions, subsequently adopted by the Conference as resolutions 2, 4, 6, 7, 12 to 16, and 18 (for the texts of the resolutions, see chap. VII below).

C. Geographical names

94. The representative of Canada reminded the Conference that the fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names would be held at Montreal in 1987 (tentatively planned for 17 to 31 August).

95. The Executive Secretary of the Conference introduced the three members of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names present at the Conference: S. Shaw (United States of America), F. Beaudin (Canada) and F. Ormeling (Netherlands).

96. The representative of the Netherlands then gave a short introduction concerning the excellent and voluminous work the United Nations had done in the field of standardization of geographical names. The first United Nations meeting on the subject had taken place in New York in 1960. The recommendations made at that and later meetings resulted in a series of international conferences (Geneva,

London, Athens and Geneva) and in the creation of a permanent group of experts on geographical names. He noted that the United Nations was successfully promoting:

(a) The establishment in member countries of national names authorities for domestic standardization;

(b) Training courses in toponymy;

(c) The publication by member States of toponymic guidelines (with the Austrian model as a sample) containing such items as the legal status of names, the alphabets and/or romanization keys in use, spelling rules, a real distribution of languages, and names authorities. Approximately 30 countries had presented their toponymic guidelines.

97. Further, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names had studied romanization systems for non-Roman alphabets and scripts and adopted resolutions containing recommendations on the international acceptance of those donor systems. It had reached agreement with the International Hydrographic Organization on the naming of maritime and undersea features and with the International Astronomical Union on the naming of extraterrestrial features.

98. A first regional conference for the Latin American Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names had been held during December 1984 at Havana (see para. 102 below), at which the need for establishing national names authorities and training courses in toponymy had been noted.

99. The representative of Canada made a presentation on the Quebec Commission on Toponymy and Official Geographic Names (E/CONF.77/L.64), reporting on its work and on the publication of an official gazetteer of Quebec to which approximately 10,000 new names were added per year; at present 102,000 had been collected.

100. The United States of America presented a paper on cartography and geographic names (E/CONF.77/L.21), giving the views of the United States on the need to create a names authority, develop training programmes, publish gazetteers, and support the work of the United Nations in those aspects.

101. The United States of America submitted a paper on the geographic names information system (E/CONF.77/L.25), reporting on a system that was now fully established at the United States Geological Survey, including over 2 million names. The information content was published formally in the states volumes of the National Gazetteer of the United States of America, which was being prepared.

102. The Secretariat of the United Nations presented a report on the First Regional Conference of the Latin American Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at Havana (E/CONF.77/L.41).

103. In addition, the Secretariat presented five conference room papers on geographical names, which had been prepared by the Governments of France (E/CONF.77/1985/CRP.1), Suriname (E/CONF.77/1985/CRP.2), Austria (E/CONF.77/1985/CRP.3), the United States of America (E/CONF.77/1985/CRP.4) and Canada (E/CONF.77/1985/CRP.7); and one paper which summarized the work of the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held at Geneva in October 1984 (ESA/RT/C/GN/9-E/CONF.77/1985/CRP.5).

14. National names authority

The Conference,

Considering that there is a need for awareness in Governments of the importance of general geographical information as a basic tool for the promotion of decision-making,

Noting that the standardization of geographical names is closely linked to this concept and that geographic information standardization requires a rational process and an organizational capability,

Recommends Member States in the region to establish national names authorities to assist them in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

15. Toponymic guidelines

The Conference,

Recognizing the importance of resolution 4 of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names 9/ on the publication of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors,

Noting the publication of toponymic guidelines by about 30 countries,

Recommends that countries of the region should be encouraged to publish and keep up to date toponymic guidelines for map and other editors which will enable cartographers of other countries to deal appropriately with problems of cartographic toponymy.

16. Training in geographic names

The Conference,

Noting that there exists a need for professional personnel with education in cartographic toponymy in the region,

Noting further that few universities and academic institutions have cartographic toponymy as part of their curricula,

1. Recommends that each country should aim at providing training in cartographic toponymy at the university or corresponding academic level;

2. Further recommends the holding of short courses in cartographic toponymy and requests the United Nations Secretariat to seek appropriate funding for such courses and seminars.