

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour, on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Xie Qimai of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, to welcome all of you to this Twelfth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, and I want, in particular, to thank your Government for the tremendous efforts made to allow you to be here.

My report will be as brief as possible, as I believe I will be able to contribute more whenever respective items on the agenda are discussed. However, I would like to cover now a few points of general interest.

The invitations by the Secretary-General to attend this Session were sent on 17 April 1986 to all the Governments who had previously sent experts to our Sessions. In addition, several other Governments ^{1/} showed interest in participating in our Group and were informed of the standard procedure to follow. As in the past, invitations were also sent to various international organizations: The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, the International Cartographic Association, the International Hydrographic Organization, and the Pan-American Institute for Geography and History.

During the past two years since our last Session, close contacts were maintained between the Secretariat and several members of the Group, in particular, of course, with you, Mr. Chairman. Several circular letters were sent to all experts forwarding communications either from the Chairman, from convenors, from members of the Group or from myself. These circular

1/ Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen.

letters kept the Group informed of the various activities being carried out by Working Groups, individual members or by ECOSOC and the Secretariat. The correspondence between individual experts or governmental agencies and the Secretariat has been extensive and, in particular, dealing with matters pertaining to training courses, terminology and on the special issue of the World Cartography Bulletin devoted to geographical names.

The problem of standardization of geographical names has occupied a prominent place at the 3rd U.N. Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas, which was held in New York in February-March 1985. Three members of the U.N. Group of Experts on Geographical Names were present at the Conference: A. Shaw (United States of America), F. Beaudin (Canada) and F. Ozmeling (Netherlands).

Mr. Ozmeling gave a short introduction concerning the excellent and voluminous work the United Nations had done in the field of standardization of geographical names and gave an overview of all the activities being undertaken.

Mr. Beaudin reminded the Conference that the fifth U.N. Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names would be held in Montreal in 1987 from 17 to 31 August.

Several conference papers were presented by Canada and the U.S.A. In addition, 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).

The Secretariat also in accordance with the wish of the UNGEGN at its 11th Session, 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).

The Conference adopted three resolutions pertaining to Geographical Names, namely on the establishment of National Names Authority, on the publication of Toponymic guidelines and on the Training in geographical names.

All these documents are available for consultation.

On the occasion of the holding of the U.N. Interregional Seminar on the Role of Surveying, Mapping and Charting in Country Development Programming held in Ottawa in November 1985, the standardization of geographical names is also one of the subjects studied and it was brilliantly exposed by Mr. Rayburn (our rapporteur) in his lecture entitled "The Importance of the Geographical Names Authority in Support of Mapping and Charting."

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close this bird's eye view with three very good news items.

The first one is related to the holding, in Rabat, of a most successful training course in Toponymy for arabic speaking countries. I will not go into details as they are the object of a working paper and will be exposed by Prof. Ormeling and Prof. Tazi. But let me just say that it has been brilliantly exposed by Prof. Tazi and that it was attended by 120 participants from 15 arab speaking countries. Besides the impressive list of Moroccan lecturers, three international lecturers, Prof. Saad Abdou from Saudi Arabi, Prof. Ormeling (Netherlands) and Mr. Bonnely (Canada) contributed also to the success of the training course. The text of the lectures are also available for consultation.

The second piece of good news is the publication by the Department of Conference Services, Translation Division, of a revision of the six languages glossary entitled "Technical Terminology Employed in the Standardization of Geographical Names."

The Secretariat is deeply indebted for your great contribution in providing the Secretariat with all the necessary material.

And less but by no means least, it is with the greatest pleasure that I report the publication of the long awaited special issue of "World Cartography" vol. XVIII, entirely devoted to the subject of standardization of geographical names. And I would like to thank all its contributors but in particular the members of the editorial board, our chairman Mr. Blok, Mr. Breu, Mr. Orth and a very special thank you to Mr. Rayburn who finalized the manuscript. This publication has been reviewed more favourably in many technical and scientific magazines and my office has received numerous most eulogious comments about it. In some institutions of higher learning, it has already become a reference book in this subject. This publication, together with the glossary are the first two United Nations publications relying extensively on material made available by the Group in general and by the Working Group on Definitions in particular.

Lastly, the ECOSOC at its second regular session of 1985 adopted the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1986-87 and approved the proposed dates of 18-31 August 1987 for the holding of the 5th Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in Montreal. The 13th Session of the UNGEGN will be held, as usual, one day before and one day after the Conference.

I wish you, Mr. Chairman, and all members of the Group every success in your deliberations, and let me assure you that the Secretariat will do all it can towards bringing your efforts to a successful completion.