

DUTCH AND GERMAN-SPEAKING DIVISIONREPORT FOR SOUTH AFRICA ON ACTIVITIES SINCE 1989

Presented by Peter E. Raper (South Africa)

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS

In order to publicize United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names with a view to their implementation, two congress papers on the subject were presented. At the Fifth Southern African Names Congress held in Mmabatho, Bophuthatswana, from 29 September to 1 October 1989, a paper entitled Implementing United Nations Resolutions on the Standardization of Geographical Names was read. A paper on Geographical Names Authorities and the Treatment of Names was read at the Linguistic Society Congress of Southern Africa held in Stellenbosch from 4 to 5 July 1990. On the basis of this paper the Executive Committee of the Linguistic Society was requested to petition the Minister of National Education to extend the brief and functions of the South African national geographical names authority with a view to implementing relevant United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names.

2. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AUTHORITY

Five meetings were held of the South African geographical names authority, the National Place Names Committee (NPNC), while its sub-committee, which does preparatory work, met at intervals of one to two months.

A sub-committee of the NPNC was nominated to investigate the feasibility and desirability of assigning statutory powers to the NPNC. Its recommendations were against such a step.

With a view to the implementation of resolutions of the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the UNGEGN expert for South Africa submitted to the NPNC at its meeting of 21 September 1989 a proposal that read as follows:

- "(i) In accordance with Resolution 4E of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, lists of standardized geographical names, or gazetteers, are published by many countries in the world.
- (ii) At the 14th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEEN) held in Geneva from 17 to 26 May

1989 the importance was once again emphasized of such lists of approved standardized names for each country, and the essentiality thereof for effective communication, as well as the social and economic advantages, stressed. With reference to the above-mentioned resolution of the First UN Conference countries were encouraged to prepare and publish lists of standardized names, together with appropriate information on each name as explicated in the relevant resolutions.

- (iii) With regard to the stated advantages and the image of the Republic of South Africa at a national and international level it is important that the National Place Names Committee prepare such a list of geographical names or gazetteer.
- (iv) It is therefore proposed that the National Place Names Committee ... investigate the feasibility of compiling and publishing a gazetteer of geographical names in South Africa ... that ... complies with international standards."

At the meeting of 26 April 1990 the Executive Officer of the NPNC pointed out that in terms of rationalization of State Departments the functions of the NPNC had been restricted to the following:

"The Committee advises the Minister of Constitutional Development and National Education:

- (a) on all proposals received from interested bodies for the approval of new place names and for the changing of existing and approved place names in the Republic of South Africa;
- (b) on request and at its own initiative, on the revision of approved place names in order to keep pace with changes in spelling and styling.

Since the approval of official place names (cities, towns, townships, post offices, motor bus stopping places and railway stations) is at issue, the Minister specifically scaled down the functions of the NPNC to render only this service."

The Executive Officer also informed the meeting "that a former Minister of National Education had approved the publication of a supplementary list (1978-1988 and subsequently annually) to the publication Official Place Names in the Republic of South Africa and in South West Africa," and added that "the National Place Names Committee was only responsible for the publishing of official place names, namely towns, railway stations, etc."

### 3. PUBLICATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN THEIR STANDARDIZED FORM

- (a) A list of official place names in South Africa approved by the National Place Names Committee (NPNC) between 1978 and 1989 was published.

- (b) An Illustrated Dictionary of Southern African Place Names, by Peter E. Raper, is at the press. It contains some 5 000 entries on names of topographical and cultural features. Standardized names have been marked as such.

#### 4. CONCISE NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

Work has been resumed on the Concise Gazetteer of South Africa which is being prepared in accordance with Recommendation E of Resolution 4 of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Some 5 000 entries have been written. All names from the 1:1,000,000 scale aeronautical charts, with relevant data as stipulated in Resolution 4E of the First UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, have been computerized. Where relevant, official and unofficial variants are being added, as well as names and data from other sources. The names are being updated in accordance with the latest orthographic rules applicable to the various languages from which the geographical names are derived.

Until the completion and publication of the above-mentioned Gazetteer, recourse may be had to the second edition of the Dictionary of Southern African Place Names, by P. E. Raper, which contains some 5 000 entries, in which standardized names are marked with an asterisk. With a view to promoting the implementation of Resolutions of the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, reference to these resolutions has been made in the Introduction to this book.

#### 5. TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES

In accordance with a revision of the general orthographic rules applying to the fused or separate writing of compound words in Afrikaans, the orthographic rules applying to geographical names in Afrikaans were revised. Moreover, the National Place Names Committee has revised the orthographic rules applicable to geographical names derived from Zulu. As a result of these developments a third edition of South Africa's Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors has been prepared.

#### 6. EXONYMS

In pursuance of resolutions 28 and 29(1) and 29(2) of the Second UN Conference and subsequent relevant resolutions, a list of Afrikaans exonyms has been compiled. In addition to the exonyms are provided their equivalents in English and also the nationally standardized names.