

29 April 1970
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES ON ITS SECOND SESSION
from 10 to 20 March 1970

Terms of reference

1. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Geographical Names was invited by the Secretary-General, in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV), to convene its second session at United Nations Headquarters from 10 to 20 March 1970. The first session of the Group had been held at Geneva, on 22 September 1967. The Group considered the desirability of holding a second United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names and specific matters referred to it by the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names which was held at Geneva in September 1967.

Attendance

2. The session was attended by twenty-five experts, representing twelve of the fourteen major linguistic/geographical divisions^{1/} of the world as defined at the Geneva Conference. A list of the experts is given in annex I.
3. Mr. Erik O. Dahle, Chief of the Cartography Section, acted as the Executive Secretary and Mr. Chris N. Christopher served as the Secretary for the Group.

1/ During the course of the meeting, it was agreed that the word "division" should replace the word "region". See United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Vol. I: Report of the Conference, (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.I.9), p.7.

Opening of the session

4. The Acting Assistant Director of the Resources and Transport Division opened the session on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Adoption of the rules of procedure

5. The Group adopted as its rules of procedure those of the Geneva Conference,^{2/} with the following modifications:

Rule 1. Each participant shall participate as an expert rather than as a representative of a State.

Rules 2-4. These rules were not applicable, credentials not being required since the experts were invited rather than appointed.

Rule 6. The officers elected at the Geneva Conference shall function until the next conference.

Rule 24. Decisions shall be made either by a consensus of the Group or by a majority vote of the divisions rather than by a majority of the experts present.

Rule 26. Roll-call votes, if required, shall be taken beginning with the division whose name is drawn by lot by the Chairman.

Officers of the second session

6. The officers at the second session were those elected at Geneva:

Chairman: Dr. Meredith F. Burrill

Vice-Chairman: Mr. A.M. Komkov

Rapporteur: Mr. F. Nédélec

Messrs. Loxton, Geelan and Page were appointed by the Chairman as assistants to the Rapporteur.

2/ Ibid., para. 5.

Adoption of the agenda

7. The Group adopted as its agenda the provisional agenda circulated with the letter of invitation (see annex II).

Aims, functions and modus operandi

8. By Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV), the Ad Hoc Group of Experts was 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.

9. In order to carry out its work and to achieve the results required, on both the national and international level, as specified in the resolutions adopted at the Geneva Conference,^{3/} the linguistic/geographical divisions as defined in the report of that Conference will continue to exist and the Ad Hoc Group of Experts will encourage and support meetings to be held within each of the divisions.

10. The fourteen major linguistic/geographical divisions of the world as defined at Geneva in 1967 and subsequently modified by the Ad Hoc Group are as follows:

1. United States of America and Canada
2. Latin America
3. United Kingdom Group
4. Dutch and German-speaking Group
5. Norden
6. Romance languages area, other than Latin America
7. Europe East Central and South-East
8. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
9. Arabic
10. Asia Southwest, other than Arabic
11. Indian Group
12. Asia South-east
13. Asia East
14. Africa South of the Sahara

^{3/} Ibid., pp. 9-15.

11. A country not already a member of a division will decide for itself to which division it wishes to belong. A country may also participate in the activities of divisions other than its own, provided the total number of countries and the nature of their participation are not such as to change the linguistic/geographical character of the division.
12. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts is composed of one representative from each division. Countries within each division will select, by methods of their own choosing, an expert to represent the division at meetings of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts and to speak, when required to do so, on behalf of the division as a whole at United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. As an interim measure, the officers of the present Ad Hoc Group of Experts will continue to function until replaced by election.
13. The appointed expert will be responsible for ensuring that the work of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts and its potential for technical assistance are brought to the attention of the individual nations within his division and for reporting to the United Nations any special problems within his division.
14. Governments may appoint national experts to attend meetings of the Ad Hoc 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.
15. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts will elect the following officers: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Rapporteur.
16. The elections will be held at the termination of the United Nations conference 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 will provide the secretariat for the Group.
17. 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.
18. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts will meet just before and immediately after each United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names in

the place where the conference is to be held; the Group will meet at least one year in advance of each such conference in order to make preparations for the conference; at times other than those mentioned above, meetings of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts may be specially convened.

19. Persons with special knowledge of particular aspects of the standardization of geographical names may be invited to place before the Ad Hoc Group of Experts their specialized knowledge.

20. During the meetings of the Ad Hoc 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.

21. Between meetings of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, working groups of specialists may be formed under the chairmanship of one of the national experts to study particular problems. Such groups will only be formed with the approval of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts. Their conclusions and recommendations will require approval by the Ad Hoc Group of Experts before submission to the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names for final acceptance.

22. The working languages of the United Nations selected for the conduct of business during the meetings of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts will depend upon the nature of the representation and the facilities available at the time.

23. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts will maintain communication among themselves and will render a report of their main activities semi-annually to the Cartography Section of the United Nations and to the members and officers of the Group.

24. 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 Ad Hoc Group of Experts.

25. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts will encourage countries to supply information to other nations within or outside their respective divisions and also to the United Nations Cartography Section.

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Activities of the Group of Experts and of its Chairman

26. The Chairman reported on the results of the Economic and Social Council meeting of 18 May 1968 at which the Geneva Conference resolutions for a permanent committee and the holding of a second conference were considered. Unfortunately, it was not possible to establish a new body, such as the permanent committee, nor to make any financial commitments owing to lack of funds. However, the Economic and Social Council had invited the Ad Hoc Group of Experts already established at the Conference to carry out the functions proposed for the permanent committee and had requested the Secretary-General to consult with the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on the holding of a second conference on the standardization of geographical names. During the Council session, members had taken note of the excellent attendance at the Geneva Conference and the high percentage of participants who were technical people, and it had been stated that the obvious success of the Conference was a very strong argument to continue the Ad Hoc Group of Experts and its programmes.
27. At the first session of the Group of Experts at Geneva, most of those who had expressed interest in serving as experts had said that they would have to have the consent of their Governments inasmuch as the expenses of attending the meetings would have to be borne by their Governments. Few of them subsequently provided information on that point and therefore the composition of the Group had not been established. It was further not feasible to implement the suggestion recorded in the report of the Geneva Conference^{4/} that the countries should select the expert to represent the division, and it was decided that any country wishing to send an expert to the meetings should be free to do so. Since the final composition of the proposed permanent committee had been referred to the Group of Experts, it had not been considered essential to resolve the problem in advance.
28. The Chairman had attended two international conferences during 1968: the First Central American Regional Meeting on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Guatemala in October, and the International Geographical Congress held at New Delhi, India, in December, and at both Conferences he had reported

^{4/} Ibid., p. 7.

on the results and resolutions of the Conference at Geneva. At the Guatemala meeting, he had presented a paper entitled "International aspects of geographical name standardization", and at New Delhi he had presented one entitled "International geographical names standardization, 1967 Conference".^{5/}

29. En route to and from New Delhi in 1968, the Chairman had visited geographical names specialists at Athens, Ankara, Beirut, Jerusalem, Manila, Nicosia, Taipei and Tokyo. It had become apparent that communications from the United Nations were not always getting through to the people interested in names, and that additional channels were necessary. It was also evident that people were sincerely trying to implement the resolutions of the Geneva Conference.

30. In September 1969, Dr. Burrill attended the tenth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences at Vienna in his capacity as United States member of the International Committee on Onomastic Sciences (ICOS). Within the framework of that Congress, a section had been established to deal with cartographic toponymy. A group of toponymists had submitted to that section a resolution^{6/} which was discussed and finally accepted by the Congress. Dr. Burrill had unsuccessfully urged ICOS to enhance its role as a scientific fact-finding body and refrain from endorsement of controversial subjects of that kind. Dr. Brey, the expert from Austria, had shown the visiting United States delegation some of the results of the work that had been done in Austria since the Geneva Conference and had provided copies of a specialized glossary that had been distributed both before and during the Congress.^{7/}

^{5/} Copies of both papers may be obtained from the Cartography Section of the United Nations on request.

^{6/} "The 10th International Congress on Onomastic Sciences recommends all concerned with topical onomastic questions, especially the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, to apply where possible in the field of onomastic sciences the rules of transliteration contained in the recommendations of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), unless in particular cases important reasons warrant deviations. The existing divergences between ISO rules of transliteration and customary practice in countries using non-Latin scripts should be eliminated by co-operation between such countries, the ISO, and the competent scientific (philological) organizations."

^{7/} Copies of the glossary may be obtained from the Cartography Section of the United Nations, on request.

31. The United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) had held the seventh meeting in their series of biennial consultations in 1968, at which, among other matters, a joint statement on romanization had been worked out; a copy of the paper entitled "Statement on romanization" was distributed to the Group.
32. The Chairman further reported that he had participated in the First Central American Regional Meeting on Standardization of Geographical Names, held at Guatemala City in October 1968, Guatemala had put at the disposal of its neighbours its experience and expertise in a national programme of name standardization, including a field demonstration. All Central American countries had attended and all but Nicaragua had sent technical people. Great interest had been stimulated and several countries were expected to register new programmes.
33. The Dutch and German-speaking Group had held a meeting in January 1969. A report of this meeting was submitted to the Group.^{8/}
34. The Chairman reported that the United States Board of Geographical Names had extended its co-operative activity with other countries by supplying them with print-outs of punched-card files and negatives from which gazetteers could be made after appropriate revision, and by sending them name lists to be checked by their names authorities.
35. Two new BGN Gazetteers,^{9/} the first edition of No. 111 on Undersea Features and the third edition of No. 14 on Antarctica, incorporate the results of extensive co-operation with other countries.

Communication "network"

36. A problem in communication had arisen because the experts and other participants at the Geneva meeting had failed to supply their full addresses, and certain of the materials sent had been returned by the postal authorities.

^{8/} Copies of the paper may be obtained from the Cartography Section of the United Nations on request.

^{9/} Copies of these gazetteers are available for reference in the Map Collection of the United Nations Library.

The problem had been further compounded by the fact that United Nations material distributed through official channels was, in many countries, not reaching the persons concerned with geographical names problems. The Group therefore provided their official addresses, which are listed in annex I. It was agreed that, in order to speed up communications, the Group would distribute material directly among themselves as well as to the United Nations.

37. It was further agreed that, using United Nations Terminology Bulletin No. 248 (ST/CS/SER.F/248 and addenda) as a basis, one person should be designated from each of the countries listed as a Member of the United Nations or as a member of its specialized agencies or as a Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice to serve as the recipient of all material circulated through that communication network. In addition, all the experts and the designated contacts would be informally alerted to the distribution of United Nations material sent through official channels.

Activities at the national level

38. In his general report to the Group, the Chairman introduced written reports by the experts from France, India, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Norway and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. A joint report was submitted by the Dutch and German-speaking Group, representing Austria, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland.^{10/} Verbal reports were given by the experts from the remaining countries participating. Each of the reports indicated accelerated progress in the field of names standardization directly attributable to the Geneva Conference of 1967, and an increase in communication among countries on this subject.

Minority languages

39. In view of the widespread difficulty in handling the languages of minority peoples, and in order to comprehend better the variety of conditions in the various countries, the Group suggested that the representatives of the various

^{10/} Copies of these reports may be obtained from the Cartography Section of the United Nations on request.

countries collect and analyse the pertinent information available in their respective countries, prepare statements and disseminate them to the fourteen linguistic/geographical divisions.

Undersea features

40. In connexion with item 4 (b) of its agenda, "Review of the activities of international bodies dealing with maritime and undersea features", the Group defined the following areas for consideration: terms and definitions, new names, and consultations with international bodies.

41. Mr. A.M. Komkov submitted a paper entitled "Concerning the establishment of names and terms to designate maritime and undersea features", which was considered by a working group composed of Messrs. Burrill, Delaney, Hovda, Komkov, Meynen and Sadeghian. The substance of their deliberations is contained in annex III. The working group unanimously recommended that further study should be made by the Ad Hoc Group of Experts with respect to creating guidelines for name applications, the definition of descriptive terminology, methods of recording and stabilizing undersea nomenclature, and the determination of the agency or agencies best suited to centralize and disseminate such information.

42. Several reports by delegates related in part to undersea nomenclature, notably that by Dr. Meynen in connexion with his work on compiling a dictionary of geographical names and technical terms.

43. The Group decided to establish a working group of specialists on the question to study further, in the terms set out above, the nomenclature of undersea features. It was agreed that the working group should include experts from Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, India, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United States of America. Mr. Delaney was nominated as the organizer of this working group.

African languages

44. The Group of Experts considered resolutions 16 and 18 of the Geneva Conference^{11/} on the problems of recording geographical names from African languages, many of which are still wholly or partially unwritten.

45. It was agreed that more detailed information would need to be collected from Africa before the Group could make recommendations on those problems. As a first step, the Group requested the Secretariat to send a questionnaire approved by it to the thirty-five Member States of Africa South of the Sahara. However, closer investigation would be necessary as a follow-up to this problem. It was suggested that a divisional conference of those countries might be held, but finding a host country and ensuring 100 per cent attendance from the thirty-five States was considered at this time to be impracticable. It was considered that a more practical proposal would be for Mr. J. Loxton, the divisional expert sitting with the Group of Experts, to tour the countries of his division, prepare a study on each of them and compile a comprehensive report for future consideration by the Group. Financial aid would be necessary to carry out the proposal, however, and it was suggested that the Ford Foundation should be approached since that institution might consider this an appropriate project for financing. The Group requested the divisional expert to submit an application to the Ford Foundation regional office in Nairobi, Kenya.

Extraterrestrial topographic names

46. The Group first considered whether its competence covered the consideration of extraterrestrial topographic nomenclature. The proposition was advanced that such names are not geographical and that they fall more properly within the field of the astronomer, but the majority opinion was that changing technology in space matters was placing it within the purview of both the cartographer and the geographer.

47. Mr. Komkov spoke at some length on the production of maps of the far side of the moon by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and noted that a significant number of names had been tentatively applied on such maps. He explained that it was impossible to wait for approval of those names by the

11/ United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Vol. I: Report of the Conference, chap. III.

International Astronomical Union if the maps were to be issued within a reasonable period. Mr. Lewis supplemented Mr. Komkov's remarks with a summary of the history of lunar nomenclature. He pointed out that a numbering system has been employed by the United States of America in lieu of names to avoid the establishment of terminology not yet approved internationally.

48. The Group decided to establish a working group on this subject composed of experts from the United Kingdom, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United States of America. Mr. Komkov was nominated as the organizer of the Group.

Unwritten languages

49. The Group, recognizing that adequate documentation for a very large number of the unwritten languages of the world is currently unavailable, and taking cognizance of the principles and procedures embodied in resolution 16 of the Geneva Conference of 1967,^{11/} urged that, prior to the next full conference, each country which has a problem with regard to unwritten languages collect the pertinent information and material available, prepare a descriptive statement, and disseminate that statement to the fourteen divisions. Particular attention was drawn to Information Paper No. 4, "Standardization of place names",^{12/} presented by Mr. Nédélec, as a valuable tool in the collection of pertinent information on unwritten languages.

Chinese

50. The Group, in considering resolution 15^{11/} of the Geneva Conference of 1967, took cognizance of Working Paper No. 17, presented by Mr. Tsao, entitled "Report on romanization"^{12/} and of the work currently being done in the Republic of China on improvements in the romanization system now in official use there, and recommended that, prior to the next conference, the Republic of China should attempt to complete this work and disseminate the completed information to the fourteen divisions. The Group further recommended that countries doing work

^{12/} Copies of the paper may be obtained from the Cartography Section of the United Nations, on request.

on Chinese geographical names prepare statements of the procedures they follow and their reasons for doing so, and disseminate them to the fourteen divisions.

Cambodian

51. The Group, noting the desirability of adopting a single romanization system for Cambodian geographical names, and in pursuance of the recommendation of the representative of Cambodia at the Geneva Conference of 1967,^{13/} agreed that the joint Cambodian and BGN/PCGN 1962 system for transliteration of Cambodian geographical names in official use in Cambodia should be proposed for adoption. A copy of the system will be made available to the next conference.

Amharic

52. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts requested the Cartography Section of the United Nations to contact the Ethiopian cartographic authorities with a view to obtaining official confirmation that the Ethiopian national names authority had adopted the joint Ethiopian and BGN/PCGN 1967 transliteration system for Amharic.

Working group on a single romanization system

53. In accordance with resolution 9 of the Geneva Conference,^{11/} the Group agreed to set up a special working group charged with making a comparative study of the various systems of transliteration and to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of each for the international standardization of geographical names. The members of the special working group are Messrs. Breu, Geelan, Gómez de Silva, Halvorsen (provisionally recommended by Mr. Per Hovda), Komkov, Nédélec, Page and Sharma.^{14/} The Group of Experts recognized that such a comparative study would need to be extremely detailed and would have to be carried out by correspondence, at least in its early stages. Later, the special

^{13/} See United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Conference and Technical Papers (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.69.I.8), pp. 71-72.

^{14/} Mr. Gómez de Silva was unanimously elected Chairman of the special working group.

working group would have to meet when and where necessary. Mr. Komkov stressed that the services of specialists would be indispensable and that the members of the special working group should be prepared to play a liaison role in this respect.

Preparation of a list of geographical names

54. The Group recommended that Working Papers Nos. 7 and 25, entitled respectively "List of geographical names in the official languages of the United Nations" and "List of geographical names for international use"^{15/} be referred to the fourth session of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts which, it is expected, will meet immediately before the second United Nations Conference on the standardization of geographical names. The Group will also consider any other documentation on the subject that may be made available at that session.

Staffing

55. The Group recommended that the Cartography Section be strengthened to meet the anticipated increase in work related to the standardization of geographical names.

Periodicity of conferences

56. It was the conclusion of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts that United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names should be held at intervals of no less than three years and no more than four years.

Place and date of the third session of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts

57. The Group agreed that a preparatory session before the next conference should be held at United Nations Headquarters early in 1971, the expenses incurred by the experts to be borne by their Government.

^{15/} Copies of the papers may be obtained from the Cartography Section of the United Nations, on request.

Second United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names

58. The Group agreed that a second United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names should be held during the last quarter of 1971 or the first quarter of 1972.

Annex I

NAMES AND OFFICIAL ADDRESSES OF PARTICIPANTS

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Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the session
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Report of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts:
 - (a) Activities of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts
 - (b) Regional meetings
 - (c) Activities at the national level
4. Items referred to the Ad Hoc Group of Experts by the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names:
 - (a) Composition and modus operandi of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts (pp.7-8)^{a/}
 - (b) Review of the activities of international bodies dealing with maritime and undersea features (resolution 8.B.1, p. 12):
 - (i) Terms and definition
 - (ii) New names
 - (iii) Consultations with international bodies
 - (c) Recording and processing:
 - (i) Unwritten African languages (resolution 18, p. 14)
 - (ii) Minority languages (resolution 20, p. 14)
 - (iii) Cambodian (p. 6)
 - (iv) Amharic (resolution 17, p. 14)
 - (v) Chinese (resolution 15, p. 13)
 - (vi) Working group on a single romanization system (resolution 9, paras. 2 and 3, pp. 12-13)
5. Extraterrestrial topographic names

^{a/} Information in parentheses is a reference to United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, vol. 1: Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.I.9).

6. Convening of a second United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names
7. Other business
8. Adoption of the report of the session

Annex III

STATEMENT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES OF UNDERSEA FEATURES AND RELATED
DESCRIPTIVE TERMINOLOGY

It became rapidly apparent that a consensus existed in the working group on the need to standardize the names of undersea features.

There was general agreement that while some useful approaches to the resolution of the problems of undersea features' designation have been made by such organizations as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) and the International Association on Physical Oceanography (IAPCO), and valuable contributions to this end are embodied in the work of Wiseman and Ovey as well as in the report of the Subcommittee on General Bathymetric Charts of the Oceans (GEBCO) of the International Association on Physical Oceanography and in the works on geographical names issued by national agencies, none the less, the proposition succinctly stated in the working paper entitled "Concerning the establishment of names and terms to designate maritime and undersea features":^{a/} "under such circumstances the United Nations, as the most representative organization, can and should take the initiative in working out the international rules regulating the treatment of the names and terms for maritime and undersea features, namely, collection, concordance among and approval by all the countries concerned, final acceptance and distribution of the forms established, represented the view of this working group respecting the need for further study of this subject on the following specific points:

(a) Guidelines governing the appropriateness of names proposed for application to undersea features and an explanation of the rationale of such guidelines;

(b) A continuing consideration of descriptive terminology respecting such features;

(c) The establishment of an internationally accessible collection, recording and control system;

^{a/} A copy of the paper may be obtained from the Cartography Section of the United Nations, on request.

(d) The designation of the agency or agencies best suited to the attainment of those objectives;

(e) The method by which these desiderata could best be implemented.

In conclusion, it was considered that the points noted above should be referred to a working group of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Geographical Names for investigation and report, and, further, that this working group should avail itself of the expertise of specialists available to the United Nations.
