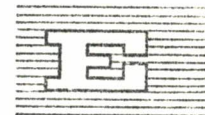


UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
LIMITED
E/CONF.61/L.103
15 May 1972
ENGLISH ONLY

SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
London, 10-31 May 1972
Item 15 of the provisional agenda

STATUS REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION

Presented by the International Hydrographic Organization

STATUS REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION

Since the First United Nations Conference in Geneva, geographical name progress in the IHO can be mentioned under six fairly brief points:

1. First, on the status of our organization itself: Since the Geneva Conference our name has changed. The new Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization, which had been approved by the 9th International Hydrographic Conference in May 1967, won the required number of formal ratifications and entered into force on 22 September 1970. From that date, what had been known as the International Hydrographic Bureau since 1921, almost 50 years before, now became the International Hydrographic Organization, or IHO. But the designation International Hydrographic Bureau, or IHB, was retained to identify the permanent headquarters organization in Monaco. Thus our 43 Member Governments belong to the IHO, while the three Directors and the staff constitute the IHB, a part of the IHO.

Since 1967 the IHO has also grown a little. We lost one member, Paraguay, but we have added three, for Ecuador re-joined our ranks and Colombia and Zaire have both become Members. This gives us 43 Member Governments at present, but it is a pleasure to report that Singapore needs now only deposit its instrument of ratification to complete the last step of formalities to become the 44th Member.

2. There have been no changes made to those existing IHO Technical Resolutions on the subject of geographical names, some of which date back to the 1st International Hydrographic Conference of 1919, which were reported at Geneva. These were extracted and distributed at the 1967 Conference and they were then reproduced in the printed Volume 2 of the Proceedings of that Conference on pages 115-116.

3. It can be reported with pleasure, however, that some small but rather significant progress in the additional or closer compliance with those existing resolutions by some countries has occurred. During the past five years specifications were developed by an IHO Study Commission and then adopted by our Member States for the first two series of International Charts, at scales of 1:10,000,000 and 1:3,500,000, and it is particularly gratifying to note that the first few of these International (or INT) charts have just recently been published. A few

words of background explanation may be appropriate for those who are neither hydrographers or navigators - or maybe not even cartographers. The concrete example of the charting of the Mediterranean Sea will serve to illustrate the problem. Up until now there have been a number of countries which felt they needed to have a nautical chart available for their merchant marine and for their naval fleet for the entire Mediterranean. So there existed a Spanish chart, a French chart, an Italian chart, a British chart, a German chart, a United States chart ... each one of which had been laboriously compiled in detail in the individual hydrographic office of the particular producing nation, but each of which was essentially very similar when completed, even to scale, and for many of the symbols, thanks to the standardization of symbols and abbreviations that the IHB has brought about in the past 50 years. But, it was clear that one nation could do the original compilation of such a chart and then, if reproduction materials were made available, other nations needing the same chart could use these to print their own versions - even making slight changes by shifting to national languages in the chart title block or adding national language place names for international features, if they felt it necessary or desirable. This is exactly what has now happened. It is already well on the way to existence for these first two small scale series, and now a new Study Commission is to take up the next step, admittedly more difficult, of possible International Charts at medium and large scales.

But the point of great interest for name standardization is this: As a result of the existence of specifications now for a chart that is to be used internationally, to cite a specific example, the United States of America which previously had used on its nautical charts of foreign areas geographic names for cities, places, islands, and so on that were, "in exact agreement with the most authoritative usage of the country having sovereignty", as specified in the IHO Technical Resolution. But the United States of America (the Naval Oceanographic Office in this case) had used English versions for the names of the countries themselves on its charts. To comply with the specifications for the INT charts, however, it was brought to the attention of the United States that the name, for example, should appear as REPUBLICA DOMINICANA on the chart and not as DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. Now by the same token we can expect that the Italian INT chart being produced to cover the western Mediterranean will use the name FRANCE instead of FRANZIA, and so on. Thus there is definitely some progress going on.

4. An action taken by the 10th International Hydrographic Conference in April 1972 should also be reported. There was a proposal by the United States of America that those nations who are responsible for compiling the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans or GEBCO, as we call it -- the GEBCO plotting sheets, where, at a scale of 1:1,000,000 all known depths are plotted --- that these nations prepare a corresponding overlay for geographic names, using the official GEBCO nomenclature. Discussion of this proposal first covered the question of whether such an overlay should be required at a scale of 1:1,000,000, which is the scale of the plotting sheets, or only at a scale of 1:10,000,000, which is the scale at which the finished 24 sheets of the GEBCO are printed by the IGN in Paris for sale and distribution. Logic seemed to favor doing the name work at the larger scale, and it was clear that the governments of the IHO desired to have the IHB in Monaco serve as a repository for these compilations of names and to shift the role of the GEBCO Subcommittee on Geographic Names to an advisory role rather than to continue its task of acquisition of names. (This refers to the work done by Dr. Matsuzaki of Japan until 1969 and since then by Dr. Kawakami, the Japanese Hydrographer at present, which was last published in 1966.)

Final action taken on this proposal on the geographic names overlays for the GEBCO by the 10th International Hydrographic Conference was to refer it to the IHB to be studied and then to be handled by correspondence as a detailed change to the GEBCO Regulations, so that it will first be considered and voted upon by those 19 nations (now including Turkey and the Phipippines, and which may soon also include Greece) who are the voluntary participants in the GEBCO Program and who have accepted the responsibility for the keeping up to date of the 1:1,000,000 scale bathymetric plotting sheets.

5. Mention was made at Geneva of the IHO Special Publication No. 23, titled "Limits of Oceans and Seas" -- which is also mentioned in at least two of the national reports that have been distributed for this present Conference. This publication had been out of print in English, but in 1971 it was reprinted and is again available for free distribution to the Hydrographic Offices of IHO Member Governments or for sale to any other agency or individual who wishes to have one; it also exists in French. A copy is being delivered to the Conference to be placed on display for inspection by anyone not already familiar with it. At the same time it must once more be underscored that definite limitations apply to this publication: it serves a vital purpose in establishing, for the use of Hydrographic Offices, some arbitrary and accepted lines of demarcation between various oceans, seas, bays, and so forth, so that when Notices to Mariners are broadcast or printed and received by mariners, for example, the same thing will be meant by the term Tyrhennian Sea or Gulf of Mexico. These arbitrary lines, however, do NOT necessarily follow any strict geological basis, which explains why sometimes oceanographers or geomorphologists, not understanding WHY this publication exists, may criticize it.

6. Finally, at the 9th International Hydrographic Conference in 1967 the Chilean delegation made a strong plea, which was noted briefly in the remarks of the IHB representative at Geneva, for action to retain long-established place names that honored explorers or surveyors and had come to be well known to navigators the world over --- that such place names should not be changed when some wave of nationalism seeks to put all place names in the national pattern and eliminate foreign influences. Two illustrations will clarify what Chile had stressed. One example might be the Strait of Magellan, which should not be changed by either Chile or Argentina (or by anyone else, we hope) to some other name. In this case, not only is it used in a great number of nautical charts and Sailing Directions and other publications of hydrographic offices of any nations, but it has in turn given the basis for the scientific biological names of many species of fauna or flora found in those waters. As a second example, Chile gave the very vivid case of the need to avoid translating proper place names which were the names of persons, mentioning the case of an island named for a Lieutenant Graves of the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom who had done the original surveying of the area off the coast of Chile in this case and whose name appeared on charts as Graves Island. But a French chart had appeared of the same area where this had been translated into, in French, Ile des Tombeaux.

Now, the action taken during the past five years on this resolution introduced in 1967 by Chile and some other countries has been that it has been published in the Report of Proceedings of the 1967 Conference, which was distributed in 1969, so we can hope that Hydrographic Offices are reminded NOT to change these long-standing names, and further action was referred to the IHB. What has the IHB done? Primarily we have sought to establish closer co-operation with the United Nations on the whole general subject of geographic names and, in fact, that is one reason, of course, why we await the second conference. The IHO will be represented during the appropriate committee sessions, particularly in Committee V on discussion of agenda items 14 and 15.

We assure the United Nations of the basic desire of the IHB and the IHO to continue and to improve our co-operation in this vital area of interest to both of our organizations.