

UN Group of Experts on
Geographical Names

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AIMS, FUNCTIONS AND MODUS OPERANDI
OF THE UN GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

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In order to have the "Aims, functions and modus operandi" of our United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names compiled for easy reference, the Expert of the Latin America Division avails itself of this opportunity to mention following facts:

- (I) Our "Aims, functions and modus operandi" was adopted during our second session (March 1970) and modified at the fifth session (March 1973).
- (II) It is considered inconvenient to consult the document after amended for several reasons. Besides the modification stated under sub-paragraph (I) above, there are other which can be stated as follows:
 - a. As during our second session the matter became item 8, the document which in fact is our internal rules of procedure started with said number. Logically it has to start with number 1.
 - b. Resolution 3 of our U.N. London May 1972 Conference and sub-paragraph (b) of the Economic and Social Council resolution adopted at the 1854th meeting of its 54th session held on 4 May 1973, approved the change from "Ad-Hoc Group of Experts" to "United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names". Thus, the proper wording is supposed to be changed.
- (III) Considering the fact that above-mentioned document has to start logically with item one as copied below, for information purposes only the change of numbers of the items would be: 1, old 8; 2, old 9; 3, old 11 (as # 10 supposedly has to be omitted due to the contents of paragraph 9 made at our fifth session); 4, old 12; 5, old 13; 6, old 14; 7, old 15; 8, old 16; 9, old 17; 10, old 18; 11, old 19; 12, old 20; 13, old 21; 14, old 22; 15, old 23; 16, old 24 and 17, old 25.
- (IV) During our 5th session I made a suggestion to the effect that when appointing special Working Groups, their fulfillment of assigned tasks should be for a clearly specified period of time, not to exceed the next scheduled U.N. Conference. This suggestion, if I recall right, was approved but does not appear in the corresponding report. It is believed it should also be included in our "modus operandi" as amendment to the new item 12 (old 20) in the wording which has to be approved during our sixth session.
- (V) The first sentence of paragraph 13 (old # 21) is inconsistent with the rest of old paragraph 21. In fact, the approved amendment refers to working groups that can be formed between meetings of our Group of Experts, while the rest, especially the following part of paragraph 21 says that "such groups will only be formed with the approval of the Group of Experts". In other words, no new groups (working groups) can be formed without approval, and in the present case as our sessions are scheduled, there is a time of two years in between. It is clearly understood that there is an inconsistency between the first and second sentence of the paragraph, unless the spirit of the second sentence would refer to the official sanction by the whole Group of Experts at its next meeting of a Working Group formed in between the two sessions, but this would be - in case it would happen - to place the Group of Experts before an accomplished fact. Thus the inconsistency mentioned, and at the next session of our Group of Experts, if not before by correspondence (according to what the Chairman may resolve) this item must be clearly stated and clarified.

- (vi) At the present time it is also a known fact among us Division Experts, that in the best interests of our Group of Experts and in case the necessity may arise, that the Chairman is duly authorized to appoint special working groups and to inform the Group as a whole during its next meeting on this subject. However, this (as far as I can recall) tacit authorization given during one of our past sessions does not, and must also appear within our "modus operandi". Hereto applies also the last paragraph of my preceding (v).

AIMS, FUNCTIONS AND MODUS OPERANDI

1. By Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV) and later ones, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has been 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.
2. In order to carry out its work and to achieve the results required, on both the national and the international level, as specified in the resolutions adopted at United Nations conferences, the linguistic/geographical divisions are listed below:
 1. United States of America - Canada Division.
 2. Latin America Division.
 3. United Kingdom Division.
 4. Dutch and German-Speaking Division.
 5. Norden Division.
 6. Romance Languages Division (other than Latin America).
 7. East Central and South East Europe Division.
 8. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Division.
 9. Arabic Division.
 10. Asia, Southwest Division (other than Arabic).
 11. India Division.
 12. Asia, Southeast Division.
 13. Asia, East Division.
 14. Africa East Division.
 15. Africa West Division.
3. 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.

4. The 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 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 Group of Experts will continue to function until replaced by election.
5. The appointed Expert will be responsible for ensuring that the work of the 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.
6. Governments may appoint national experts to attend meetings of the 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. The Group of Experts would welcome participation by countries that have not yet participated in conferences or Group of Experts sessions to take part, especially when their language or script is to be taken under consideration.
7. The Group of Experts will elect the following officers: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Rapporteur.
8. The elections ^{MENTIONED UNDER ITEM 7} will be held at the termination of the ^{RESPECTIVE} 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.
9. 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.
10. The 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 Group of Experts may be specially convened.
11. Persons with special knowledge of particular aspects of the standardization of geographical names may be invited to place before the Group of Experts their specialized knowledge.
12. During the meetings of the 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.

13. Working groups of specialists may be formed under the chairmanship of one of the national experts referred to in paragraph 6, to study particular problems, between meetings of the Group of Experts. Such groups will only be formed with the approval of the Group of Experts. Their conclusions and recommendations will require approval by the Group of Experts before submission to the United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names for final acceptance.
14. The working languages of the United Nations selected for the conduct of business during the meetings of the Group of Experts will depend upon the nature of the representation and the facilities available at the time.
15. The 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.
16. 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 Group of Experts.
17. The 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.