

New York, 26 February-9 March 1979
Agenda item No. 9

UP-DATING OF THE AIMS, FUNCTIONS AND MODUS OPERANDI OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP
OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

(Submitted by Francis Gall)

1. It is deemed very necessary to have our "Aims, Functions and Modus Operandi" brought up-to-date. The reason for having written this working paper, is that the undersigned formed part of the Group which set them up in March 1970 during our second session, modified them at the fifth session (March 1973) and also suggested some changes as adopted at our sixth session (March 1975). During the latter one, after much constructive discussion, they were finally adopted as they are now (ESA/RT/C/GN/4, 17 June 1975, pp. 42/44).
2. The tasks of our Group of Experts (when will it be named officially at long last "Permanent Committee" as envisaged in Geneva's Resolution 1, taking into consideration that its functions are really those, as well as that our ad-honorem activities do not gravitate at all on the U.N. budget?), have become not only too diffuse but also too big for practical management and to keep up. Therefore, it is felt that the urgent need exists to redefine our purpose and methods of procedure. This means also an up-dating in accordance with the Athens Resolutions, like for instance number 5 (Divisional activities and meetings) plus other ones, to include also the now approved new divisional composition, and so forth.
3. Due to the natural evolution, it is felt that some changes must be incorporated. It is thus also believed that the Chairman of our GEGN thought this to be imperative as he included item 9, "Review of aims", in the agenda draft he forwarded on 17 August 1978, as per item (3) of his general distribution circular number 4 dated 14 November 1978.
4. It is felt that logically, that our Chairman should be duly authorized to a some more flexible but set-up action, which is lacking now.
5. It is also deemed necessary to mention explicitly, for instance, and thus have it down in writing, that with the required time in advance the Secretary of our Group should notify at least the Division Chairmen not only the information regarding proposed U.N. Conferences but also their provisional agendas and so forth in matters related to Geography (which includes Cartography) for the proper action and known reasons, and so forth.
6. It is also believed that there exists the necessity to mention the known fact, that the services of the Experts within our UNGEGN should be performed at the expense of the respective Governments, and so forth.
7. These are only some of the ideas which I believe necessary to incorporate within the proposed up-dating. It is also felt that the Experts here present may have

also some other ideas as to what should be incorporated. It is hoped that they will think over this matter previously and, if possible, discuss them.

8. So as to have everything in one single document, to the effect of not having to consult different ones, our present "aims, functions and modus operandi" are copied, as appears in document ESA/RT/C/GN/4 of 17 June 1975:

" AIMS, FUNCTIONS AND MODUS OPERANDI

1. By Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968 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 achieve the results required, on both the national and the international levels, as specified in the resolutions adopted at United Nations conferences, the linguistic/geographical divisions listed below were formed:

Africa East Division
Africa West Division
Arabic Division
Asia, East Division (other than China)
Asia, South-East Division
Asia, South-West Division (other than Arabic)
China Division
Dutch and German-speaking Division
East Central and South-East Europe Division
India Division
Latin America Division
Norden Division
Romano-Hellenic Division
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Division
United Kingdom Division
United States of America - Canada Division

3. Membership of Divisions

(a) A country not already a member of a division will decide for itself to which division it wishes to belong.

(b) 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, 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 in accordance with the precedents set by the Economic and Social Council.
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 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.