

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

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**Tenth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012

Item 16 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation:

Features common to two or more nations

**Report on the Progress in Consultations on the Naming of the Sea Area
between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago**

Submitted by the Republic of Korea **

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** Prepared by the Government of the Republic of Korea

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Summary

The 9th UNCSGN recommended the three countries directly concerned to report the outcome of their discussions on the issue of naming the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago to the 10th Conference. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Conference, the Republic of Korea has had consultations with the countries directly concerned to seek a mutually agreeable solution. During the two bilateral meetings with Japan in 2008 and 2011, Japan insisted on the sole and exclusive use of "Sea of Japan", refusing to consider any other options. The discussions among the directly concerned parties also took place in the context of IHO S-23 WG. In spite of two years of consultation, the S-23 WG was not able to reach a consensus on the issue. Consequently, the 18th IHC took note of the final report of the S-23 WG and decided not to take any decisions on this matter. The Republic of Korea believes that the name "East Sea", which has been used for more than 2,000 years, deserves to be properly recognized in the international community. Pending an agreement among the directly concerned parties on this issue, the Republic of Korea is of the view that the concurrent use of "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan" is the most reasonable solution in accordance with UNCSGN Resolution III/20 of 1977.

Report on the Progress in Consultations on the Naming of the Sea Area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago

The United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) has discussed the issue of the naming of the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago since the 6th UNCSGN in 1992. The 9th UNCSGN, held in New York in August 2007, encouraged the three countries concerned to continue their efforts to find a solution acceptable to all of them, taking into account relevant resolutions and to report the outcome of their discussions to the next Conference.

Pursuant to the recommendation of the Conference, the Republic of Korea has made sincere efforts to seek a mutually agreeable solution through consultations with the countries directly involved. The Republic of Korea had two bilateral discussions with Japan in January 2008 and in November 2011. Throughout these discussions, the Republic of Korea was ready to consider all constructive ideas to properly recognize the name “East Sea” in the international community, while Japan insisted on the sole and exclusive use of “Sea of Japan.” Under these circumstances, the countries concerned have not been able to make substantive progress on this matter.

Meanwhile, the three concerned countries participated in the debate on the issue of naming the sea area in question within the Working Group on the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) publication “Limits of Oceans and Seas(S-23)” (S-23 WG), chaired by International Hydrographic Bureau(IHB) President Alexandros Maratos. In the S-23 WG, various proposals were put forward to resolve the issue. For example, a WG member suggested showing concurrently all the endonyms and exonyms for the sea area in question. However, the Chair of the S-23 WG singled out a proposal, in which the name "Japan Sea" is to be used solely on the main page of the publication and the name "East Sea" to appear in the Annex as a reservation, and pushed forward it without the consent of the directly concerned countries. The Chair’s proposal gained very little support among the members of the WG and was consequently rejected. As the discussions within the S-23 WG were merely focused on the Chair’s proposal, the S-23 WG could not discuss all the other constructive proposals adequately. This ruled out the possibility that the concerned countries could find a mutually agreeable solution in the context of S-23 WG of the IHO.

Under the circumstances where Japan continues to insist on the sole and exclusive use of “Sea of Japan” and agreement among concerned parties is not likely for the time being, the Republic of Korea is of the view that the concurrent use of the name “East Sea” and “Sea of Japan” is the most reasonable solution in accordance with Resolution III/20 of this Conference adopted in 1977. The Resolution recommends that when countries sharing a given geographical feature do not succeed in agreeing on a common name, it should be a general rule of international cartography that the name used by each of the countries concerned will be accepted.

Indeed, the name “East Sea” is gaining wide acceptance at the international level. An increasing number of atlases, books and papers refer to the sea area in question as "East Sea" together with "Sea of Japan." For instance, the world’s prominent cartographers, publishers and medias, such as National Geographic, The Times Books, Le Grand Atlas, Le Figaro, The Economist and CNN, use the dual name of “East Sea” and “Sea of Japan” in their publications and articles. Most recently, the Austrian Board on Geographical Names (AKO) recommended the concurrent use of “Ostmeer (East Sea)” and “Japanisches Meer (Sea of Japan)” in “Recommendations for the

rendering of geographical names in Austrian educational media (Empfehlungen zur Schreibung geographischer Namen in österreichischen Bildungsmedien)". According to a survey by the Government of the Republic of Korea, the use of the name "East Sea" in commercial maps worldwide have increased tenfold in 2009, representing a sharp increase compared to those in 2000. These statistics are a strong indication of international trend towards recognizing the name "East Sea."

Geographical names form an integral part of cultural heritage and a people's identity and history. The name "East Sea", which has been used for more than 2,000 years, is deeply rooted in culture and history of the Korean people as evidenced in numerous historical documents. The book, "History of the Three Kingdoms" shows that the name "East Sea" was used from around 50 B.C in the ancient kingdoms of Korea. Numerous literary and geographic works also show the name "East Sea" has been closely connected to daily lives of Korean people for more than 2,000 years.

The concurrent use of "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan" is an inclusive and fair solution in that it does not adopt one name at the expense of the other. Each littoral state's use of geographical names is respected in this formula. This is what the Resolution III/20 recommends in the absence of an agreement on a common name. The sea area in question consists of territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zones of the Republic of Korea, Japan, the DPRK and Russia. As the name being used by two littoral states, "East Sea" should be recognized as a legitimate name of the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago.

It is highly recommended that the Conference should apply its own resolution III/20 to this case and encourage member states to accept the concurrent use of "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan." Meanwhile, the Republic of Korea will spare no effort to resolve this issue by consultations with the countries directly concerned and will remain open to any constructive suggestions in this regard.