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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Athens, 17 August-7 September 1977

Item 14 of the provisional agenda.

Policies, procedures and co-operative
arrangements for the naming of features
beyond a single sovereignty:

(b) Maritime features

(c) Undersea features

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON UNDERSEA AND MARITIME
FEATURES OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES*

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Maritime Features of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names,
United States Board on Geographic Names, Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT: Report of UNGEGN Working Group on Undersea and Maritime Features

In the period after the 1975 meeting of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), I sent communications to members asking for comments on the Working Group's programme. The objective was to develop statements on naming undersea and maritime features which reflected members' views and which could be presented to the Third United Nations Conference for possible adoption as international standards.

Specific attention was focused on the first two elements of the 4-point programme:

(a) Establishment of policies and principles by which undersea and maritime features could be named.

(b) Development of a form by which new names could be proposed.

Members will recall that Board on Geographic Names (BGN) policies and principles and a BGN proposal form were offered as models.

As of 15 May 1977, only a few countries had expressed opinions regarding principles, a fact that could suggest that most of the members of the Working Group were satisfied with the BGN documents. Of those responding (Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, and the USSR), only Canada presented suggestions that seemed to call for any revision of the BGN material. Accordingly, representatives of the United States and Canada worked to prepare a statement that could meet the requirements both nations felt important. As a result, a new statement of principles and procedures was developed, the content of which varies only slightly from the original BGN text. The chief difference is one of format. At the same time, some minor changes were made to the BGN proposal form.

A recommendation submitted by the USSR was later added to the statement of principles and procedures. It recommends that specific elements of names of features not be translated from the form given by the nation providing the accepted name.

The new statement of principles and procedures, called "Proposed Guidelines for the Standardization of Undersea and Maritime Feature Names for International Use", is presented with this letter. As Convenor of the Working Group, I recommend that it be supported by the UNGEGN for further recommendation to the United Nations Conference. I also recommend that the proposal form (also enclosed) be endorsed.

I would like to point out that the sections of the statement concerning principles and procedures make no distinction between undersea and maritime features. My review of existing literature shows that virtually all of the concern of the Working Group has been directed toward undersea features, and with good reason, for there is little requirement to name maritime features. For this reason, practically all of the guidance is oriented toward seabottom features,

even though in the general part of the guidelines, working definitions of the two categories of the features are provided.

There is, nevertheless, a requirement of some magnitude for the Working Group to examine the problem of names of "international" maritime features which extend to areas of national sovereignty where they may have different names. Related to this is the problem of features common to two or more sovereign areas that have different names. Material sent to the Convenor by the Federal Republic of Germany made reference to such problems, and I recommend that the Working Group add this concern to its programme.

Finally, although generic terms were not the subject of the Working Group's concern during the past two years (but were part of the general work programme), I have taken the liberty of presenting a list of terms and their definitions recently worked out on a provisional basis by Canada and the United States. While not all of them necessarily represent official Canadian terms, they have been endorsed by the United States. I recommend the UNCEGN approve these terms and definitions and recommend them to the United Nations Conference for international use.

In summary, I submit for your review and endorsement:

1. Proposed Guidelines for the Standardization of Undersea and Maritime Feature Names for International Use.
2. Undersea or Maritime Feature Name Proposal Form.
3. Proposed Undersea Feature Terms and Definitions.

In the event that the basic documents cited here are adopted by the Conference, I recommend that members proceed with the fourth point of the original programme, namely, the translation of the documents into appropriate languages. I also recommend the committee add to its programme the matter of naming maritime features that include both national and international waters.

3 Enclosures as stated

(Signed) Richard R. RANDALL
Convenor
UNCEGN Working Group on Undersea
and Maritime Features

25 May 1977

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR THE STANDARDIZATION
OF UNDERSEA AND MARITIME FEATURE NAMES FOR
INTERNATIONAL USE

I. General

A. International concern for naming undersea and maritime features is limited to those features entirely or mainly (more than 50 per cent) outside waters under the jurisdiction of sovereign States.

B. "Undersea feature" is a part of the ocean floor or seabed that has measurable relief or is delimited by relief. "Maritime feature" is a part of the surface of the ocean or sea that has distinguishable characteristics.

C. Names used for many years may be accepted even though they do not conform to normal principles of nomenclature.

D. Names approved by sovereign States in waters beyond national limits (i.e., international waters) should be accepted by other States if the names have been applied in conformance with internationally accepted principles. Names applied by States within their sovereign limits should be recognized by other States.

E. In the event of a conflict, the States most directly involved should resolve the matter. Where two names have been applied to the same feature, the older name should be accepted. Where a single name has been applied to two different features, the feature named first should retain the name.

F. Names not in the writing system of the country applying the names on maps or other documents should be transliterated according to the system adopted by the national authority applying the names.

G. Sovereign States may utilize their preferred versions of exonyms.

H. Only those undersea features that can be delimited by isobaths should be named.

II. Principles for Naming Features

A. Specific Terms

1. Short and simple terms (or names) are preferable.

2. The first choice of a specific term, where feasible, should be one associated with a geographical feature; e.g., Aleutian Ridge, Aleutian Trench, Peru-Chile Trench, Barrow Canyon.

Enclosure 1

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3. Specific terms for other features can be used to commemorate ships or other vehicles, expeditions, or scientific institutes involved in the discovery of the feature. Where a ship name is used, it should be that of the discovering ship, or if that has been previously used for a similar feature, it should be the name of the ship verifying the feature, e.g., San Pablo Seamount, Atlantis II Seamounts.

4. Names of living persons are permissible. Use of this type of name, however, should be limited to the following:

(a) Persons associated with the discovery or verification of the feature.

(b) Persons involved in the interpretation of data leading to the recognition of the unique character of a feature.

(c) Persons who have made significant contributions to the knowledge of the oceans.

5. Groups of like features may be named collectively for specific categories of historical persons, mythical figures, stars, constellations, fish, birds, animals, etc. Examples are as follows:

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| Musicians Seamounts | Bach Seamount, Brahms Seamount, Schubert Seamount |
|---------------------|--|

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|------------------------|--|
| Electricians Seamounts | Volta Seamount, Ampere Seamount, Galvani Seamount |
|------------------------|--|

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|---|---|
| Ursa Minor Ridge and Trough Province | Suhail Ridge, Kochab Ridge, Polaris Trough |
|---|---|

6. Descriptive names are acceptable, particularly when they refer to distinguishing characteristics (e.g., Hook Ridge, Horseshoe Seamounts).

7. Names of well-known or large features that are applied to other features should have the same spelling.

8. Specific elements of names should not be translated from the language of the nation providing the accepted name.

B. Generic Terms

1. Generic terms should be selected and defined to reflect physical characteristics of features. Various theories of genesis may also be considered in naming or defining features when genetic information is essential to a comprehension of a feature's character.

2. Generic terms should be in the language of the nation applying the name to a product.

3. It should be recognized that as ocean mapping continues, features will be discovered for which existing terminology is not adequate. New terms required to describe these features should conform to the guidelines cited under B.1.

III. Procedures for Naming Features

A. Sovereign States applying names to unnamed features in international waters should adhere to internationally accepted principles and procedures.

B. The attached form is recommended as a model for new proposals.

C. Prior to the naming of a feature, identification of its character, extent, and position shall have been established sufficiently for identification. Positions should be given in terms of geographic co-ordinates. If it is necessary to refer to a feature before such full identifiability has been established, it is suggested that the reference be by co-ordinates and generic term with the addition of (PA) - Position Approximate - after the co-ordinates if the position is not adequately established and (?) after the generic term if the nature of the feature is in some doubt.

D. New names should be approved by the appropriate national authorities before being published.

E. If a State has reason to change the name of a feature, information justifying the change should be circulated to other concerned States. If there is opposition to a name change, the involved States should communicate with each other to resolve the question.

F. States actively engaged in naming undersea features should regularly publicize their names decisions.

G. States naming features within their sovereign limits should conform to the principles and procedures stated above.

UNDERSEA OR MARITIME FEATURE NAME PROPOSAL

Ocean or Sea _____ Name proposed _____

Location of midpoint: Lat. _____ (N) (S), Long. _____ (E) (W);

_____ kilometers in _____ direction from _____

Description: Kind of feature: _____

Identifying or categorizing characteristics (size, shape, dimensions, least depth, steepness, etc.--use additional coordinates for extremities of lineal features): _____

Associated features: _____

Chart reference:

Shown and named on chart (map) _____

Shown but not named on chart (map) _____

Not shown but within area covered by _____

Reason for choice of name:

If for a person, state how associated with the feature to be named _____

Discovery facts: Date _____; by (individuals or ship) _____

By means of (equipment): _____

Navigation used: _____

Estimated positional accuracy in nautical miles: _____

Description of survey (track spacing, line crossings, grid network, etc.): _____

Nature and repository of other survey activities (dredge samples, cores, magnetics, gravity, photographs, etc.) _____

Supporting material: Enclose, if possible, a sketch map of the survey area, profiles of the feature, etc. Reference to prior publication, if any: _____

SUBMITTED BY: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

CONCURRED IN BY (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

25 May 1977

PROPOSED UNDERSEA FEATURE TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

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| APRON | A gentle slope with a generally smooth surface on the sea floor, particularly found around groups of islands or <u>seamounts</u> . |
| BANK | An elevation of the sea floor located on a <u>shelf</u> and over which the depth of water is relatively shallow but sufficient for safe surface navigation. |
| BASIN | A depression more or less equidimensional in form and of variable extent. |
| BORDERLAND | A region adjacent to a continent, normally occupied by or bordering a <u>shelf</u> , that is highly irregular with depths well in excess of those typical of a <u>shelf</u> . |
| CANYON | A relatively narrow, deep depression with steep sides, the bottom of which has a continuous slope. |
| CONTINENTAL RISE | A gentle slope with a generally smooth surface, rising toward the foot of the <u>slope</u> . |
| CORDILLERA | An entire mountain system including all the subordinate <u>ranges</u> , interior <u>plateaus</u> and <u>basins</u> . |
| ESCARPMENT | An elongated and comparatively steep slope separating flat or gently sloping areas. (Also called <u>Scarp</u> .) |
| FAN | A relatively smooth feature normally sloping away from the lower termination of a <u>canyon</u> . |
| FRACTURE ZONE | An extensive linear zone of unusually irregular topography of the sea floor characterized by more than one kind of feature such as large <u>seamounts</u> , steep-sided or asymmetrical <u>ridges</u> , <u>troughs</u> , or <u>escarpments</u> . |
| GAP | A narrow break in a <u>ridge</u> or <u>rise</u> . |
| GUYOT | Alternate term for <u>Tablemount</u> . |
| HILL | An elevation rising generally less than 200 metres (100 fathoms). |
| HOLE | A small depression of the sea floor. |
| KNOLL | An elevation less than 1,000 metres (or 500 fathoms) and of limited extent across the summit. |

Enclosure 3

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| LEVEE | An embankment bordering one or both sides of a <u>canyon</u> , <u>valley</u> , or <u>seachannel</u> . |
| MOAT | An annular depression that may not be continuous, located at the base of many <u>seamounts</u> , islands, and other isolated elevations. |
| MOUNTAINS | A well delineated subdivision of a large and complex positive feature. |
| PEAK | A prominent individual pointed top on a <u>ridge</u> or a complex <u>seamount</u> . |
| PLAIN | A flat, gently sloping or nearly level region. |
| PLATEAU | A comparatively flat-topped elevation of considerable extent across the summit and usually rising more than 200 metres (or 100 fathoms) on at least one side. |
| PROVINCE | A region identifiable by a group of similar physiographic features whose characteristics are markedly in contrast with surrounding areas. |
| RANGE | A series of associated <u>ridges</u> or <u>seamounts</u> . |
| REEF | A consolidated rock hazard to navigation with a least depth of 30 metres (or 15 fathoms) or less. |
| RIDGE | A long, narrow elevation with steep sides. |
| RISE | A long, broad elevation that rises gently and generally smoothly. |
| SADDLE | A low part, resembling in shape a saddle, in a <u>ridge</u> or between contiguous <u>seamounts</u> . |
| SCARP | Alternate term for <u>Escarpment</u> . |
| SEACHANNEL | A long, narrow, U-shaped, or V-shaped, shallow depression of the sea floor, usually occurring on a gently sloping <u>plain</u> or <u>fan</u> . |
| SEAMOUNT | An elevation rising 1,000 metres (or 500 fathoms) or more and of limited extent across the summit. |
| SHELF | A zone adjacent to a continent or an island that extends from the low water line to a depth at which there is usually a marked increase of slope to greater depth. |
| SHOAL | A hazard to navigation with a least depth of 30 metres (or 15 fathoms) or less, composed of unconsolidated material. |

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| SILL | The low part of a <u>gap</u> or <u>saddle</u> separating <u>basins</u> . |
| SLOPE | The descending slope seaward from the <u>shelf</u> edge to the beginning of a <u>rise</u> or the point where there is a general reduction in slope. |
| SPUR | A subordinate elevation, <u>ridge</u> , or <u>rise</u> projecting outward from a larger feature. |
| TABLEMOUNT | A <u>seamount</u> having a comparatively smooth flat top. (Also called <u>Guyot</u> .) |
| TERRACE | A bench-like feature bordering an undersea feature. |
| TRENCH | A long, narrow, deep depression with relatively steep sides. |
| TROUGH | A long depression normally of less relief than a <u>trench</u> . |
| VALLEY | A relatively shallow, wide depression, the bottom of which usually has a continuous gradient. This term is generally not used for features that have canyon-like characteristics for a significant portion of their extent. |
