

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.69/L.28 (ABSTRACT)
28 June 1977

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

COMMENTS ON THE PROGRAMME OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON UNDERSEA AND MARITIME FEATURES

Paper submitted by Hungary

Resolutions 22, 23 and 26 of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names 1/ dealt with problems relating to undersea nomenclature and the names of undersea features. The Working Group on Undersea and Maritime Features has chosen to deal with resolution 23 at this time. This resolution recommends that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names "work on a model statement or statements on the treatment of undersea feature names" and further recommends that the Group "develop model forms for proposing names ... patterned after those used by the United States Board on Geographical Names /BGN/ and by similar organizations in other countries". At the sixth session of the Group of Experts the above tasks were formulated as follows:

(a) The establishment of policies and principles by which undersea and maritime features could be named. (The BGN statement "Undersea name policies" 2/ was identified as a possible model.)

(b) The development of a form by which new names could be proposed. (The BGN form was cited as a model.)

1/ Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, London, 10-31 May 1972, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.74.I.2), chap. III.

2/ Ibid., vol. II, Technical Papers (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.74.I.4), p. 214.

In giving our comments we assume that policies and principles at the present stage are intended for use by national standardization authorities. This means that the points of view of international standardization (such as methods of stabilization, the question of possible uniformity or equivalence, the avoiding of the translation of descriptive terms etc.) are excluded. The international aspect can only be achieved if names coinciding with policies and principles laid down in a United Nations statement are included in a joint United Nations-International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) gazetteer. The procedure for such an activity was examined in detail by G. F. Delaney in information paper No. 6, "Guidelines for name applications", ^{3/} submitted to the Group of Experts at its third session. If the Working Group had any intention of including questions of international standardization now, that information paper should have been taken as a basis for discussion too.

The BGN statement is essentially a document aimed at national standardization in a specific country; some points will therefore have to be left out. We suggest the deletion of points 1, 2, 4 and 5. This means that the remaining items will be "Identification and location" (point 3), "Guidelines for selection of specific terms" (point 6), and "Names to be excepted" (point 7).

The following amendments to point 6 are considered necessary:

The reference to BGN should be omitted under point 6 (a);

The words "and maritime" should be added in paragraph 1 of point 6 (b);

In point 6 (f) ("Names considered inappropriate"), a fifth category should be included: "Names of living persons not associated with the discovery of a feature" (see point 4 of the above-mentioned information paper submitted by G. F. Delaney);

Examples of maritime names should be added where possible, since the policies do not refer only to undersea features.

It was stated in annex II to the report of the Group of Experts on its fifth session that "care should be taken to avoid overlapping the work of other agencies engaged in the same area of activity". It is therefore suggested that the existing recommendations of IHO (some of which are mentioned in circular letter No. 28, 1972, of the International Hydrographic Bureau) should be reviewed for inclusion. We think it is important that the statement resulting from the Working Group's efforts should be issued jointly by the United Nations and IHO.

The BGN statement lacks detailed information on generic terms, which are mentioned only under point 5 ("Generics in English ... will be accepted; those in other languages will be translated.") Since it is suggested that point 5 should

^{3/} Copies of the paper may be obtained from the Cartography Section, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat.

be deleted and because the wording is unsuitable, some principle on the use of generic terms has to be added. The following is a possible solution: "Generic terms should be given in the language of the respective national standardization authority, based on a joint United Nations-IHO list of generic terms with definitions".

With regard to the second item on the programme of the Working Group, the "Undersea feature name proposal" (with "and maritime" added) is more suitable than the "Antarctic name proposal" form. However, such a form is needed only if a United Nations staff unit or bureau can be created to deal with name proposals on an international level, and this "would conflict with or overlap the tasks now carried out by the GEBCO Committee of IHB", as noted by G. F. Delanev in his information paper. Perhaps the GEBCO Committee could make use of this form.