



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.74/L.93
26 August 1982

ENGLISH ONLY

Fourth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names
Geneva, 24 August to 14 September 1982
Item 12(d) of the agenda*

One copy per delegation

POLICIES PROCEDURES AND CO-OPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR
THE NAMING OF FEATURES BEYOND A SINGLE SOVEREIGNTY:
EXTRATERRESTRIAL FEATURES

The present state of the problem of naming of extra-
terrestrial topographic features

Paper presented by the Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics

* E/CONF.74/1

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FOURTH UN CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Geneva, August 24 - September 14, 1982
Item 12 of the provisional agenda

THE PRESENT STATE OF PROBLEM OF NAMING
OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Submitted by the Government of
the Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics

United Nations Organization
Economic and Social Council

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The present state of problem of naming
of extraterrestrial topographic features x/

The time since the third United Nations Conference on the standardization of geographical names has been characterized by more intensive researches and mapping of solar system planets than in the period between the second and the third conferences.

To the maps of the Moon, Mars and Mercury made at that time, new maps of larger scales for the same planets have been added, as well as maps of Venus, Jupiter satellites - Io, Europa, Ganymede, Callisto, and Saturn satellites - Rhea, Tethys, Mimas, Enceladus. A broad programme for further mapping of planets and their satellites is still in progress.

This leads to the growth of demands for the names of various topographic features, discovered on the surface of planets under exploration. With this, and it should be particularly emphasized, an urgent necessity has arisen to accelerate the procedure of naming of extraterrestrial topographic features, thus not delaying the process of map production.

The Working Group on the Names of Extraterrestrial Topographic Features formed in 1971 by the UN Group of Experts on the

x) The text of the report is prepared by A.M. Komkov, the Chairman of the Working Group on the Names of Extraterrestrial Topographic Features, the United Nations Group of Experts on the standardization of geographical names.

standardization of geographical names¹⁾, has done a great deal of work since that time. The results are presented in the published Proceedings of the Second and Third UN conferences on the standardization of geographical names and in numerous working documents adopted at the sessions of the Group of Experts.

The problem of naming of extraterrestrial topographic features was studied at the time when the programme for planet mapping had just started²⁾. The attention of International Astronomical Union (IAU) was drawn to the necessity of improving the system of naming extraterrestrial topographic features. In connection with this one possible solution of the problem was proposed. It was recommended that definite types and kinds of topographic features should have definite name categories³⁾.

Close working contacts were established with IAU representatives to collaborate with. All the above-said has contributed to the improvement of naming system of extraterrestrial topographic features as well as to the regulation of IAU activity in this field.

Resolution 23 (E/CONF 69/4) of the Third United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names recognized a leading part of IAU in the field of naming of extraterrestrial topographic features and recommended that the Working Group should co-operate with IAU corresponding bodies. One of them is Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature - (IAU/WGPSN). P.Millman (Canada), the Chairman of the Group

¹⁾ The Working Group membership at first was as follows; A.M.Komkov (USSR), M.F.Burrill (U.S.A.), H.G.Lewis (UK). In 1973 S.Rado (Hungary), R.Randall (U.S.A.), D.Sharma (India), D.Vayacacos (Greece) joined the Group.

²⁾ Report of the Working Group on the Names of Extraterrestrial Topographic Features. Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. London, 10-31 May 1972, Vol. II, pp.226-230.

³⁾ Problems of Extraterrestrial Topographic Feature Nomenclature. Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Athens, 17 August - 7 September 1977, Vol. II, pp. 285-287.

participated in several sessions of the UNGEGN. In addition to nine members - representatives of different countries IAU/WG has four advisers including A.M.Komkov appointed by IAU Executive Committee. This fact contributed to the consolidation of scientific contacts between Working Group of IAU and UN.

Apart from the main Working Group (IAU/WGPSN) IAU has formed five Task Groups on nomenclature of the Moon, Venus, Mercury, Mars and planets of outer solar system. Each of these Groups consists of 5 to 9 members - country representatives.

Both Task Groups and the main IAU/WGPSN function regularly and very effectively. The objectives of Task Groups are: to consider proposals submitted by different countries on the names of topographic features of a certain planet; to make lists of suggested names and submit them to the main Working Group for the consideration. Since 1971 the Working Group has been holding annual meetings in different countries (in the USSR, Hungary, France, the USA, Canada, Austria etc) to discuss lists of geographical names recommended by Task Groups.

The lists of names approved by the WG are submitted for the approval of the IAU Executive Committee not waiting for the next IAU General Assembly. This makes it possible to speed up the use of adopted names on maps and other cartographic documents to be published.

The UNGEGN activity has contributed greatly to the development of the system of extraterrestrial topographic feature names which is in use now. It provides for a possibility of choosing and adopting names on the basis of international cooperation. The application of this system permits now and in future to give memorial names after distinguished persons in science, culture and arts of any times and peoples to topographic features discovered on planets under exploration; to transfer the existent names of physico-geographical features and settlements of any country as well as personal names of different nationalities to extraterrestrial topographic features.

This is indicated in the "Preliminary Working Check-List of Topographic Names on Planetary Bodies" prepared by Peter Millman, the Chairman of the IAU/WGPSN, and published in Febru-

ary 1982 (Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada).

The Check-List includes 3362 topographic names of 18 planetary bodies (four planets and 14 satellites). There are data given in the foreword to the Check-List: on the quantity of topographic features, having names on each of the 18 planetary bodies and of a name category adopted for each planetary body; on the quantity of types of topographic features, their Latin terms and English equivalents. The Check-List consists of three parts. In the first part the topographic names are arranged in alphabetical order with the indication of a planetary body and a kind of topographic feature. In the second part the topographic names are arranged alphabetically with reference to each of the planetary bodies taken separately; in the third part the topographic names are grouped by feature types.

A "Gazetteer of Planets and Satellites" will be compiled by IAU/WGPSN on the basis of the "Preliminary Working Check-List".

All the above stated factors prove convincingly a significant progress that has been achieved lately in the field of naming of extraterrestrial topographic features. This work is in trusty hands of IAU/WGPSN which successfully fulfills its complicated and labour-consuming work on the basis of international co-operation. The main IAU Working Group and Task Groups include representatives of different countries, which gives an opportunity for any country, irrespective of its IAU membership, to submit, through its national scientific organization, a proposal of including any wished names into "bank" of names where those suggested names are stored to be used in future in forthcoming publications of planet and satellite maps. There is no special form to fill in - it is enough to give a short but well grounded reason for a proposal submitted.

Thus, under the conditions existent now, the Group of Experts on geographical names and its Working Group on the names of extraterrestrial topographic features that made a contribution to the cause of regulation (normalization) of the naming of such topographic features, may consider their tasks in this field to be fulfilled and in future fully rely upon the activity of IAU/WGPSN.