

7 Geo Names
- Correspondance
13 Jan. 1998

ROYAUME DU MAROC

ALLOCUTION DU DR. A. TAZI

PRESIDENT DE LA 7^{EME} CONFERENCE

DES NATIONS UNIES

SUR LA NORMALISATION DES NOMS GEOGRAPHIQUES

NEW YORK, LE 13 JANVIER 1998

Monsieur le Président,

Tout d'abord, je souhaite vous exprimer mes sincères félicitations pour votre élection à la Présidence de la 7ème Conférence et vous souhaite le succès et la réussite dans votre mission.

Je présente également mes sincères remerciements à tous les Collègues et Experts qui m'ont aidé et soutenu durant toute la période de ma Présidence de cette Conférence en 1992.

Je saisis cette occasion pour vous signaler, mes chers Collègues, que la Division Arabe a beaucoup bénéficié des travaux de cette Conférence depuis son adhésion, il y a plus de 20 ans. En effet, la langue arabe est devenue une langue de travail de la Conférence et du Groupe des experts ce qui a facilité la participation d'un grand nombre des pays arabes et a également permis une meilleure communication des résultats des travaux au sein de toute la Communauté parlant cette langue.

Comme vous pouvez le constater, le Groupe Arabe est actif dans les domaines traités par la Conférence et le travail présenté par mon Collègue AL HARTHY du Sultanat de OMAN est le meilleur exemple. Ce travail qui consiste en la traduction en arabe du livre portant sur les différents statuts et procédures de la Conférence et les Groupes des Experts permettra encore davantage une meilleure sensibilisation de l'opinion publique en matière de normalisation des noms géographiques.

Permettez-moi aussi, Monsieur le Président, de rappeler le projet de la recommandation proposée par la délégation marocaine et stipulant de consacrer "UNE JOURNEE MONDIALE SUR LES NOMS GEOGRAPHIQUES". Mon grand souhait est de voir cette recommandation concrétisée.

Je tiens également à rappeler le projet d'organiser une journée commémorative des personnalités mondiales ayant contribué à l'enrichissement du patrimoine géographique universel.

Enfin, tout en vous souhaitant, Monsieur le Président, encore une fois du succès, je vous demande de bien vouloir considérer cette allocution parmi les documents de la Conférence.

Je vous remercie, Monsieur le Président.

OPENING STATEMENT

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am pleased to welcome you to the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. It is gratifying to acknowledge the presence of such a large number of participants and the submission of an equally impressive number of papers, a reflection no doubts of the world wide importance and continued relevance of the subject matter of the Conference.

As we all know, the relevance of the field of cartography to development issues and, in particular, of the standardization of geographical names, have long been acknowledged by the United Nations which, through the Economic and Social Council convened in Geneva the First United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names thirty one years ago. Today, though the planet has witnessed tremendous economic and social changes and progress, continuous challenges in an ever turbulent world keep reminding us of the never ending quest for identity, respect and self-determination inherent to every human being. More than ever today, as globalization process is a common reality, communication has become a pivotal concept of development itself. The ability to communicate, hence to share and convey a cultural and

linguistic background and identity, implies a clear understanding about the names commonly used to define a living environment, with its related administrative and political entities. And as cartography is in itself highly symbolic of the communication era, more than ever it is in the service of development through the effective use of modern technology available to the information age. Specialized thematic maps, often generated through remote sensing and satellite technology, have become indispensable tools in the exploration and assessment of natural resources, and the monitoring of changes related to environment, climate, and many other factors of economic and social development. Thus, the standardization of geographical names is and remains an essential component of sustainable development while contributing to an effective and global communication process.

Economic and social benefits that individual countries can draw from the creation or the strengthening of national geographical names authorities are well known. While there is no need to enumerate the many achievements reached in more than thirty years by the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, it is important to emphasize the growing number of countries which have established national geographical names boards, have created national toponymic guidelines and have published detailed gazetteers. These activities are facilitating international standardization, a process and cooperation of particular relevance in the standardization of geographical names in border areas as well as areas beyond a single sovereignty. Training courses and workshops in toponymy and related topics have been conducted, both at the national and international levels, thus substantially contributing to capacity

building efforts. Special tribute, however, must be paid to the remarkable work performed by the members of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude their outstanding contribution and to give due credit for the significant and continuous role they played in the formulation and implementation of various conference resolutions.

This opening address would not be complete without mentioning major reforms that are now taking place at the United Nations. As a result of these reforms, all activities affecting economic and social issues have been consolidated into a single and newly established Department, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs which I have the privilege to serve. This new Department seeks to give real meaning to the notion of integrating analytical, normative and operational dimensions of development, promoting a coherent framework for the work of the United Nations in development. Recognizing the increased interdependence between cartographic-related techniques and data and other quantitative tools and statistics affecting research and policy analysis, operational activities and coordination in the economic and social fields, the Department has merged its mandate and responsibilities in cartography - including the standardization of geographical names - with those of its Statistical Division. It is hoped that such changes will enhance the capabilities of the United Nations Secretariat in better addressing the needs of Member States in line with the demands and expectations of the information age.

Before concluding, I note with regrets that, once again, this international forum is not truly representative of the universality of concern for the subject matter, as the attendance of developing countries remains limited. This is particularly preoccupying as many sensitive issues of cultural identities and associated rights of minorities - among others those of indigenous people - are clear reminders that the tasks ahead and needs for solutions are many.

Let me to express the hope that your deliberations may be constructive and fruitful, leading towards the definition of the best ways for acceptable transliteration and standardization of names so as to avoid misunderstandings and facilitate worldwide communication, while being respectful of the national and cultural specificities from which they derive.

It is my pleasure to declare open the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

Thank you for your attention.