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ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
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DRAFT REPORT

Committee III

125. The representative of the United Kingdom stated that Resolutions III/20 and II/25 both refer to shared sovereignty, whereas the name under discussion was a name of the high seas. He suggested that names of high seas be referred to the IHO. The IHO's Special Publication 23 was in the process of revision, the latest edition being 1953, and therefore it might be an appropriate time for the IHO to consider the issue.

126. The observer from the IHO remarked that the purpose of the Special Publication 23 was to facilitate international understanding of the geographical extent of high seas. The Conference was informed that the IHO had no regulatory role in standardizing geographical names, and no legal basis to its recommendations.

127. As the IHO could provide a forum for its member states to address such issues, the Chairman and the observer from IHO agreed that this matter should be put to the IHO. The delegate of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea then stated that he insisted the name "East Sea of Korea" be used and he asked this name applied in document E/CONF.91/CRP.37 as well.

Writing systems and guides to pronunciation (item 12)

128. The representative of Israel presented a paper (E/CONF.91/L.12) describing the introduction of unvocalized plene orthography in Hebrew GIS-derived digital topographic maps. He clarified that plene orthography does not alter the pronunciation of Hebrew names, and that transliteration is hardly affected. In response to a query from the representative of Morocco, it was

indicated that Arabic numerals were used on cartographic products in Israel.

Writing systems and guides to pronunciation

Romanization (item 12 (a))

129. The convenor of the Working Group on Romanization Systems of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names introduced his report (E/CONF.91/L.22), which outlined the activities of the Working Group since the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992.

130. He noted that the three-volume gazetteer of Greece published in 1993 by the Hellenic Military Geographical Service, Athens, rendered all toponyms in the ELOT 743 romanization system. This had now been superseded by a new volume published in 1997, as indicated in E/CONF.91/CRP.12 presented by Greece.

131. At the Fourteenth Session of UNGEGN, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea had agreed to cooperate in devising a single romanization system for Korean, to be based on the guidelines the two countries had submitted to the Group of Experts. Unfortunately there had been no progress on this issue for the last three years.

132. At the Sixth Conference of the United Nations on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Thailand presented a revised romanization system for Thai. In September 1997, the Convenor received an amended version from the Royal Thai Survey Department and distributed copies to all members of the Working Group for review.

133. At the Seventeenth Session United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, a provisional system for the romanization of Ukrainian had been submitted, which had been superseded by another version that Ukraine presented to the Group's Eighteenth session. The system had not yet been finalized.

134. Also at the Eighteenth Session of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, certain changes to the Survey of Israel romanization System for Hebrew were announced. The official status of these proposed changes was not known.

135. The Convenor recommended extending the mandate of the present Working Group on Romanization Systems since further discussion would be needed on some romanization systems once finalized, and on new systems for scripts not yet covered.

136. The representative from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stated that unfortunately there had been no opportunity to co-operate with the Republic of Korea on devising a single romanization system, due to the problems on the Korean Peninsula, and he went on to stress that a single system for the romanization of Korean was very much needed.

137. The representative of Israel presented a paper (E/CONF.91/L.11) highlighting the proposed changes to the Survey of Israel romanization system. He stated that although stability was an important factor in a romanization system, one had also to consider the needs of the main users of a system. He pointed out that the main users of romanized Hebrew were tourists visiting Israel. He argued that the basic changes to the system that were

being suggested would make the system more "user-oriented". Finally, it was stressed that the Group of Experts would be notified when any final decisions had been made.

138. The representative of the United Kingdom expressed his country's concerns about the proposed changes. The orthographical stability of the current system was crucial. The simplifications proposed might threaten Israel's toponymic heritage. If the proposed simplifications were to be implemented, their application should be limited to a certain category of publication, such as freely distributed tourist maps.

139. The representative of Peru also expressed his country's concerns over the proposals forwarded by Israel.

140. Referring back to the paper presented by the Convenor of the Working Group on Romanization Systems, the Executive Secretary urged experts to keep working towards a single romanization system for Korean, stating that this would be of great interest to the international community.

141. The representative of Israel presented a paper (E/CONF.91/CRP.5) outlining a survey which had been initiated in Israel to establish how users of different languages would pronounce Hebrew place names in romanized script. Foreign tourists, the largest group of users of romanized names were to be the basis of the survey. The representative from Israel stressed that the survey had not yet been completed.

142. Russia introduced a paper (E/CONF.91/CRP.30) detailing the updated Rules for the Romanization of geographical names in the

Russian Federation. Changes had occurred, making some clarifications of the methodological applications of the system necessary. Use of the system was possible for the Russian forms of the names in some of the countries of the former USSR, until such time as they had their own romanization systems. There were no mandatory rules for the use of this system at present. The rules would probably be elaborated for private companies and government in accordance with the law on geographical names.

143. The Convenor of the Working Group seconded the opinion expressed in paper E/CONF.91/CRP.39, namely that there should be some liaison between International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the subject of romanization.

Conversion into non-roman writing systems (item 12 (b))

144. No papers were presented for item 12 (b).

Writing systems and guides to pronunciation (item 12 (c))

145. No papers were presented for item 12 (c).

Toponymic Web Sites (item 13)

146. The Chairman of Committee III stressed the opportunities the World Wide Web offered for the standardization of geographical names, whilst pointing out that, as access to the Internet was still fairly restricted, the provision of paper versions of toponymic documents was still important.

147. Estonia presented a paper (E/CONF.91/L.5) describing the homepage of the Place Names Board of Estonia, which had been on the Internet since September 1997. It was stated that most of

the documents of the Board were displayed on the homepage. Through the homepage, a variety of institutions could benefit from, and add to, the activities of the Place Names Board. One page of the web site was devoted to the Baltic Division of UNGEGN and there were also links to other information on geographical names. Estonia's toponymic guidelines were also to be found on the web.

148. Germany gave a short statement about the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN) Internet web site (E/CONF.91/L.25). It was reported that the web site contained information concerning the StAGN administrative structure, history, tasks, publications and institutions represented in StAGN.

149. Germany then described the index of German-language Antarctic place names available on the Internet (E/CONF.91/L.29). The site includes details of new names proposals (even if not adopted), making the process of decision-making more public. It is hoped that a link will be established in the future to the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR).

150. Germany introduced paper E/CONF.91/L.30, which gave information on the list of country names in the German language available on the Internet.

151. The representative of Canada described the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names' (CPCGN) web site, detailed in paper E/CONF.91/L.43. Half a million geographical names records were now available on the Internet. The site

accessible in English or French, provides a reference service, and contains information on language usage, publications, regular updates on name changes, links to geographical web sites of other countries, and an educational programme. A large audience is reached by the Internet, though the importance of paper copy must not be underestimated.

152. Canada then presented paper E/CONF.91/L.42, detailing the United Nations documents available on the Canadian web site. There was some discussion about the implications in terms of copyright of putting United Nations documents on the web. This issue will have to be researched in full, as it is still a fairly recent concern due to the rapid development of the World Wide Web.

153. In response to a remark by Slovenia, who had stated that they had provided a link to Canada's site from their own, the Chairman emphasized that it was the link possibilities that gave the web its great value.

154. Canada had put together a document giving details of all web sites noted in documents of the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (E/CONF.91/CRP.40). The Conference considered this document to be very useful.

155. The representative of the United States of America presented a paper (E/CONF.91/INF/8) describing the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) World Wide Web site. It was stressed that the GNIS is the vehicle for domestic names standardization. The GNIS database lists the

federally recognized name for almost 2 million feature names within the jurisdiction of the United States of America. The site has a link to the National Imagery and Mapping Agency's (NIMA) Geographical Names Processing System which contains 4 million entries of foreign names. Conventional queries have decreased due to increased use of the Internet. The representative of the United States of America urged countries to link to this GNIS site.

156. The representative of the United States of America stated that a link would now be established between the NIMA's foreign names web site, and the other web sites listed in paper E/CONF.91/CRP.40.

157. A discussion on the cost of creating and maintaining a web site followed. Canada pointed out that there were a variety of options for a country interested in creating a web site. There was a vast difference between putting a full names database on the web and creating just a few web pages. The latter being an easier and cheaper option.

158. The representative from the United States of America stated that there was no cost recovery programme for the GNIS domestic names site. As the database supported a national mapping programme, it therefore served a federal purpose. The data had already been paid for by citizens of the USA, and therefore the data was available at no cost and with no copyright.

159. Finland presented a paper describing the Nordic Place Names Database (E/CONF.91/CRP.43), which is a joint project of five

Nordic countries. An interesting aspect of the database is the possibility to choose a map output in addition to a traditional list of names in response to a query. English, Finnish or Swedish were the working languages of the database. The representative from Finland went on to praise the work of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Exchange and Standards.

Toponymic education and practice (item 14)

Existing education and practice (item 14(a))

160. The representative of Austria presented a report on the Institute of the Military Geosystem (E/CONF.91/L.63). The structure and tasks of this Institute were outlined. It was stated that the Institute was attached to the National Defence Academy. Its main task is the procurement and supply of geographic information for military and defence bodies.

161. The representative of Algeria presented a paper in which the history and sources of toponymic research in Algeria were described (E/CONF.91/CRP. 31).

162. Algeria then presented a paper on toponymy and linguistics (E/CONF.91/CRP.32). In the paper it was noted that languages differ due to varying perceptions of the outside world. In the act of naming, each language acts selectively.

163. In reply to a question from the Chairman, the Algerian representative reported that there were two official languages of Algeria. Arabic was the official written language, whilst Berber was an unwritten language used in a number of regions. Toponyms from each area were collected and rendered without translation.

164. The representative from Algeria presented a paper on toponymy and geography (E/CONF.91/CRP.33). The representative of Israel commented on the interesting relationship between map space and geographical names, highlighted in this paper.

165. Canada referred to its previous paper (E/CONF.91/L.43), drawing attention to the description of the "SchoolNet" facility on the web site of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names. The website was shown to be providing opportunities for education in the field of toponymy at the school level.

Training courses in toponymy (item 14 (b))

166. The Convenor of the Working Group on Toponymy Courses of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names presented a report of the activities of the Working Group for the period 1992-1997 (E/CONF.91/INF/18). A list of toponymy courses held during this period was provided, along with a list of the current membership of the Working Group. A model for a Toponymy Course Programme was given, and reference was made to the Toponymy Courses web site on the Internet.

167. The representative of Latvia reported (E/CONF/91/L.48) on an international training course in toponymy of the Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in Riga, 1997. The emphasis of the three-day course was on the standardization of minority languages. Latvian, Russian and English were the languages of the course. The Convenor of the Working Group offered to distribute teaching material from the

course.

168. The observer from the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) presented a paper (E/CONF.91/INF/18) describing the Institute's two-week course on applied toponymy. He stressed that the course was intended as an introduction to the subject. The possibility of offering an advanced course was being considered. An outline of such a course was provided and it was related that the students would gain experience in both raw data analysis and in automated data processing. Finally, it was added that there had been five of these courses since the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992. The date and venue for the next course were not yet decided.

169. The representative of Iran suggested that a training course could be organized by the United Nations for the two weeks preceding a conference, or meeting of the Group of Experts. The idea was received favourably by the Conference, but it was pointed out that financial and practical problems of time might make this difficult.

170. The representative of South Africa drew attention to five United Nations Training courses which had been held in Pretoria. Of the nine countries in the Africa South Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, seven had attended a training course in Pretoria. The next course would be held in Pretoria in July 1998 and an invitation was given to any African country wishing to attend.

171. The representative from Nigeria stressed the need for training in toponymy in her country.

Exchange of advice and information (item 14 (c))

172. No papers were presented on this topic.

Exchange of personnel (item 14 (d))

173. No papers were presented on this topic.

Technical assistance (item 14 (e))

174. No papers were presented.

175. Nigeria expressed interest in having "attachment training" at the professional level. A discussion followed around the idea of countries having advanced database facilities giving professional assistance to those countries in need of technical support. Australia, Canada and the United States of America expressed willingness to help with attachment training, although a significant obstacle was seen to be financial.

Cooperation with national and international agencies and other bodies (item 15)

Cooperation with national agencies (item 15 (a))

176. Russia introduced a paper on the activity of the Working Group on Geographical Names of the Inter-state Council of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre and the Earth Remote Sensing of the CIS State-members (E/CONF.91/CRP.34). The paper included the terms of reference of this Working Group. A bulletin prepared by the Working Group entitled "Changes in geographical names in the country-members of the CIS from 1991-2000" had been issued in 1997 and had been distributed to the cartographic geodetic

services of the CIS member countries. The bulletin is available to other countries from the Federal Geodetic and Cadastral Service of Russia.

Cooperation with international organizations (item 15 (b))

177. The representative of the United States presented a paper concerning the second edition of the United States Antarctic Gazetteer (E/CONF.91/L.4). This edition replaces the First edition of 1980 and is available at the web site of the United States Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). Hard copies are also available. The gazetteer only includes names to be used by the United States of America Federal Government and approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names. The representative of Germany remarked that there was an ongoing project by the Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information at SCAR to produce a "Composite Gazetteer", consisting of all member nations' names for features in the Antarctic.

177. Austria gave a brief report of the activities of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) (E/CONF.91/INF/22). The structure of the Council was described. One of the aims of ICOS was the advancement and co-ordination of onomastic sciences at an international level. ICOS is therefore also interested in the standardization of geographical names.

Co-operation with public information media (item 15 (c))

178. Canada reported on the increased media interest in the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names during its

Centennial Year 1997 (E/CONF.91/L.37). Trying to create media interest in the subject of the standardization of geographical names was not always easy. There was also often the misconception that the committee invented names for features; the precise role of the committee could be explained clearly with the use of examples.

Country names (item 16)

179. The representative from Germany referred to a previous paper presented by Germany related to this topic (E/CONF.91/L.30). The list of country names in German, available on the Internet, was also available in hard-copy. Germany indicated that copies could be forwarded to interested parties, should they contact the address given on the paper.

180. The representative from Poland introduced a paper concerning a list of country names drawn up by the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names Outside Poland (E/CONF.91/L.57). The Conference was informed of the availability of the booklet which contained this list, and was given detailed explanations of its contents. All independent, internationally recognized countries had been included in the list, including names of United Nations members and 8 non-members. Names of autonomous and dependent territories had been placed in the appendix. Replying to a question from Slovakia concerning transliteration, Poland stated that as a rule, where no United Nations romanization system existed, systems had been adopted which were in use in Polish cartography.

181. The Convenor on the Working Group on Country Names of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names introduced the Working Group's current list of official forms of country names (E/CONF.91/L.65). The work had begun as a result of resolution VI/10. The study comprised the names of independent states generally recognized by the international community - non-United Nations members were indicated by an asterisk. The intention of the Working Group had been to list the short form and official title of each country in the working languages of the United Nations (English, French and Spanish), and also to provide the official local romanized form.

182. The attention of the Conference was drawn to an addendum to the paper (E/CONF.91/L.65/Add.1), which corrected a few entries. The Convenor acknowledged that there had been some problems in obtaining some of the information for the document, and noted that a new United Nations Terminology Bulletin 347 Rev. 1 had recently been published. It was suggested, therefore, that the Working Group continue its work and publish regular updates/amendment sheets to the current document.

183. The representative of Greece stated that there were negotiations going on at present regarding the name of the language of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He asked for the outcome of the negotiations not to be pre-empted by the use of the language designation given in the "Country Names" document. He stated that the document should be coordinated with Terminology Bulletin 347 Rev. 1.

184. The representative of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia stated that his delegation objected to the name given for his country in the "County Names" document. It was stated that the name given in the document was a result of a Security Council Resolution 817 and was not the name of the country. He indicated that the name given on the paper might be an obstacle to the good relations that were currently developing between his county and Greece.