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REPORT BY EAST AFRICA DIVISION

(submitted by W.J. Absaloms)

ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 15 - 23 OCTOBER 1984

Agenda Item 5 - Reports on the Division and Experts

Report by Africa East Division

Presented by W.J. Absaloms, Chairman of the Division

The Division was unrepresented at the Tenth Session held in Geneva on 23 August and 15 September 1982 due to circumstances beyond the control of the Chairman and other members of the Division.

Although the Division has not held any meetings since the Tenth Session, activities in the field of standardisation of geographical names continue at various levels in each member country of the Division. Correspondences from member countries of the Division reveal the following activities in the member countries:-

(i) Republic of Botswana:

The Place Names Commission was established by a Presidential Directive (CAB 51/67) dated 11th October 1967 and the Surveyor-General was appointed the Chairman of the Commission. By July 1981 the Commission had held seventy seven formal meetings at which over 2500 names were discussed. By December 1970 the Commission had met twenty six times and discussed 1043 names. In July 1981 the Commission published a Second List of Names and Recommended Spellings which is yet to be presented to Cabinet for approval. The list may be obtained from The Chairman, Place Names Commission, C/o Department of Surveys and Lands, Private Bag 0037, GABORONE, Republic of Botswana.

(ii) The Socialist Ethiopia:

Although the topic of standardisation of geographical names is a relevant subject and forms part of the list of priorities of the Provisional Military Government in Socialist Ethiopia, at the moment the Government is engaged in other more urgent projects. The position therefore remains as it has been in the last few years.

(iii) The Republic of Kenya:

The activities of standardisation of geographical names has continued in the Republic. All the new names which have been collected during the updating of topographical maps have been processed by the Committee and included in the printed maps. A revision copy of the gazetteer and a card index for new and amended names continue to be maintained for the purposes of publishing the third edition of the gazetteer. The second edition of the national gazetteer containing some 30,000 names was published in 1978 with the assistance of United States Board on Geographical Names.

The Standing Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names is presently involved with the preparation of Toponymic Guidelines For Map and Other Editors and the first may be expected soon.

(iv) Malawi:

The activities of place names have continued in Malawi and a National Gazetteer of Place Names has been compiled and is intended to be approved as an official Place Name List of Malawi. The publication of the National Atlas of Malawi is in hand and was expected to be ready during October 1984.

(v) The Peoples Republic of Mozambique:

The Republic is experiencing some problems with names along their borders where the neighbouring countries do not recognize their official version of the names and instead adopt their own. It is intended to publish a coded booklet in alphabetical order listing all the names in their national atlas which would be revised from time to time. If the list will be too voluminous then a computer assisted system may be employed.

The Republic is very keen on international standardisation and hoped that some day standardized geographical names, symbols, conventions and letters will be published for Eastern Africa in particular and Africa in general. They have also shown great interest in short training courses on toponymy and hoped that they will be invited to participate.

(vi) United Republic of Tanzania:

The Republic passed a legislation, Act No.23 of 1982, which came into operation on 1st May 1983 establishing a National Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names.

The Minister responsible appointed a committee of eighteen members together with a secretary. Twelve members of the committee come from Tanzania mainland while five come from the Island. The background of members cover government ministries, local professional bodies, the University of Dar-es-Salaam and centres for Kiswahili and Foreign languages in the Island.

The Committee has so far only dealt with basic matters relating to the establishment of working procedure and is keen to receive assistance in this respect from other older members of the Group of Experts.

(vii) Other Member Countries of the Division

No information has been received from other member countries of the Division, namely Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Swaziland, Uganda and Zambia, but it is expected that activities in the field of standardization of geographical names is still continuing.