

Ad Hoc Group of Experts on
the Standardization of
Geographical Names

Working Paper 14

Concerning the establishment of
names and terms to designate maritime and undersea
features

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Concerning the establishment of names and terms
to designate maritime and undersea features

Practically there are no nameless large geographical features on the earth surface at the present time. But one cannot say so about the bottom of the world ocean. Oceanographic and oceanologic investigations undertaken now by many countries often result in new discoveries of undersea features and, naturally, new geographic names are coming into life. The study of maps published in different countries shows that very often some undersea features have different names applied to them. Generic terms used to designate the undersea features are also different. Further examinations of the world ocean, constantly amplified and hastened, still multiply the discord of geographical names. Several international organizations - the Inter-Governmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), the International Association of Physical Oceanography (IAPO) are trying to eliminate the existing discord of geographical names, but since none of them unites all the countries participating in oceanographic investigations, their separate attempts to normalize the naming of maritime and undersea features have failed.

Under such circumstances the United Nations, as the most representative organization, can and should take the initiative in working out the international rules regulating the treatment of the names and terms for maritime and undersea features, namely: collection, concordance among and approval by all the countries concerned, final acceptance and distribution of the forms established.

It seems reasonable to form, under the leadership of the United Nations group of Experts, a special working group of specialists - representatives of both the countries concerned and international maritime organizations dealing with geographical names with the purpose of working out a draft of such regulations.

The experience in establishing names for the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) on the scale of 1:10,000,000 produced under the aegis of the International Hydrographic Bureau should be taken into account./See :

1. Proposed names of features on the deep-sea bottom. General principles guiding the allocation of names. By John D.H. Wiseman and Cameron D.Ovey;
2. Report of the sub-committee on proper geographical names for ocean bottom features under GEBCO Committee IAPO.

As is known not only States Members of the IHB but a number of other countries are taking part in production of this chart.