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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

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Item 14 of the provisional agenda.

Policies, procedures and co-operative
arrangements for the naming of features
beyond a single sovereignty:

(a) Features common to two or more nations

THE APPLICATION OF NAMES FOR TOPOGRAPHICAL
OBJECTS BETWEEN TWO AND MORE COUNTRIES IN
THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC*

Paper presented by the German Democratic Republic

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Geographers, cartographers and philologists in the GDR studied the problem of the correct spelling of geographical names of topographical objects between two and more countries, and set up uniform rules which safeguard the GDR's own national interests as well as those of other nations.

The GDR proceeds from the realization that names of topographical objects, which cover the territory of two or more countries or concern two or more national spheres of influence, need clear regulations. These regulations should not only observe the principles of standardization but consider just as well that the geographical names will remain within anybody's grasp.

On principle, the spelling of the names of these topographical objects is based on the particular national form, which means that the designations of the topographical objects are given in the relevant two or more languages. This applies, for instance, to the names of oceanic areas, of bays, lakes, rivers, mountain ranges and landscapes, and is used particularly for scientific publications and other international purposes. In order to avoid, however, for practical domestic reasons, any double designations, e.g. in the case of lack of space on small-scale maps, exceptional rules for such cases were established. These exceptional rules are based on the generally accepted principle that the names of geographical objects, that cover the territory of more but one country and which have more but one designation, may be rendered in a German spelling. The names of oceans and oceanic areas, which are international waters or concern several national spheres of influence, are likewise rendered in a German spelling. The same applies to the spelling of names of the submarine relief forms of the international oceans and oceanic areas.

In the interest of a uniform spelling of the names of these objects these names were compiled in lists and

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published. A strict standard was applied to the selection of the names in order to give priority to the principle of spelling the names in the particular national forms.

Many years of practical work have proved that these regulations meet requirements and contributed to reducing exonyms. Likewise, they are in line with resolution 25 adopted at the 2nd UN conference on the standardization of geographical names.

As far as, for instance, the names of the topographical objects at the state frontiers between the GDR on the one hand and the Polish People's Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic are concerned, their standardization was not feasible because the names concerned belong to different languages with differing letters and differing orthographies. Consequently, these topographical objects are rendered, in keeping with item 2 of recommendation 25 of the 2nd UN conference on the standardization of geographical names, in their established German form on the territory of the GDR and in their established Polish or Czech form on the territories of the Polish People's Republic or of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Examples: Westoder - Odra Zachodnia, Neisse - Nysa Kuzicka, Erzgebirge - Krusné hory, Elbe - Labe. This means that both forms of the names are on an equal footing for international use.

The same regulations are applied in the GDR for the designation of the topographical objects located at the frontiers of third countries.

Should several countries agree to use but one name for a topographical object which forms part of several national spheres of influence, the GDR is prepared to accept this new, or uniform, form and to apply it as the only form suited for international and national use. After Norway and Sweden have agreed on the Danish form of "Skagerrak" (instead

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of the Norwegian word "Skagerak" and the Swedish word "Skagerack" used formerly), the form of "Skagerrak", which is used in the GDR, is no longer an exonym.

The names of topographical objects between two and more countries, which are to be used in the GDR, are covered by the

- "Instruktion für die Schreibweise geographischer Namen in kartographischen Erzeugnissen der DDR" (Instruction for the spelling of geographical names in cartographic products of the GDR), 6th revised edition, Berlin 1977, and the
- "Allgemeine Richtlinie für die Schreibweise sonstiger geographischer Namen in kartographischen Erzeugnissen der DDR" (General guideline for the spelling of other geographical names in cartographic products of the GDR), 1st edition, Berlin 1975.

These regulations ensure that in the GDR no geographical names will be used which are outdated under historical and social aspects, and that, in this respect, no revanchist or colonialist ideas will be spread.
