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Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Reports on the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, its divisions, working groups and task teams since the Ninth Conference

Report of the United States/Canada Division for the period 2007-2012

Summary**

Since the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, in 2007, representatives of the United States/Canada Division have met as often as possible, most often at the national meetings of the names authorities in each country. Both countries continue to apply the principles and procedures set out in resolution V/22 of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, on Aboriginal/native geographical names. In both countries, activities involve agreements, use and preservation of Aboriginal/indigenous languages and policy development and enhancement. The use of databases continues to facilitate the dissemination of official names and to make names and related data more accessible to the user community.

In Canada, data on geographical names are available without cost. Various data sets and formats are available. An online database of official names approved by the Geographical Names Board of Canada has been re-engineered and improved to provide faster, more customizable searches. In the United States, the Geographic Names Information System has been redesigned to provide a faster and more intuitive public interface, with links to current maps. In 2010, the two countries collaborated on the approval of the name of a transboundary feature, the Salish Sea. Divisional representatives continue to work with various organizations to exchange experience and expertise and promote the use of official names. Both countries participate in United Nations forums and activities to further the goal of standardization and to develop policies and procedures.

* E/CONF.101/1.

** The full report was prepared by Heather Ross, a toponymist at the secretariat of the Geographical Names Board of Canada, and Lou Yost, the Acting Executive Secretary of the United States Board on Geographical Names, and is available in the language of submission only from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf10.html>.

