

**Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

Eleventh Session  
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**WORKING PAPER**

No. 2

Item No.5 of the  
Provisional Agenda\*

REPORT

ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE TENTH REGIONAL DIVISION  
AFTER THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES UNTIL THE  
END OF 1983

(Submitted by the East Central and South-East  
Europe Division)

After the fourth UN conference on standardizing geographical names (Geneva 1982) the leadership of the Xth regional division was taken over by Bulgaria. In its capacity of chairman, Bulgaria established contact with Greece and Yugoslavia for the purpose of better organizing work within the division. Albania, Cyprus and Turkey did not answer the official letters sent to them and no contact was established with them.

During this period a session of the division took place in November 1983 in Sofia, in which representatives of Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia took part. Although Greece had been contacted and had sent a message that it would participate in the session, no delegate of it arrived. Observers from the GDR, Roumania and the Soviet Union were present at the meeting too.

At the end of the session an agreement was signed which was sent to the respective organs of the absent countries. Copies of the agreement were sent to the geodetical institutions of Cuba and Mongolia as well at their request.

The main task of the session was the preparation for the participation in the eleventh session of the Group of Experts. The agenda of the session was in conformity with the preliminary agenda of that of the experts' group. The following questions

\* WP No. 1

were discussed:

1. Documents concerning the status, working principles and structure of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names at the UN.

Since the fourth conference of the UN (Geneva 1982) had assigned the elaboration of a general document regarding these matters to the USSR, the Soviet delegate, in spite of his capacity as observer, informed the participants in the session of the work performed in the Soviet Union so far. In conformity with the decision of the session Bulgaria made a summary of the notes and suggestions offered by the other participants in the group and sent it to the Central Geodesy and Cartography Office in Moscow, which is the body responsible for standardizing geographical names in the USSR.

2. A unified system for transliterating characters of national alphabets with Latin letters.

In Bulgaria a system of rendering Bulgarian letters with Latin ones is used that was adopted at the third Conference of the UN (Athens 1977). A list of Bulgarian geographical names rendered with Latin letters has been worked out and sent to press. The transliteration of Bulgarian names conforms to the system mentioned.

In Yugoslavia at present the system adopted with Resolution Number II at the Third UN Conference on standardizing geographical names remains valid. A practical verification of this system with regard to Serbo-Croatian and Macedonian spelling rules is being carried out. Yugoslavia considers it impossible that a unified system for rendering non-Latin letters with Latin ones should be offered at the present moment.

In the other member countries of the division the problem of applying the system for transliterating non-Latin characters with Latin letters is not acute, but there is a tendency with all other members of the Tenth regional division towards a gradual transition to the transliteration system recommended by the UN.

3. Indices of geographical names with a view to their international usage.

Stressing on the importance of national gazetteers, the session noted that work on a large scale is being done in the separate countries for standardizing national names and publishing them in the form of lists.

In Bulgaria the list of Bulgarian geographical names and their transliteration, accompanied with indications of their size and position has already been sent to the press. A commission specially appointed by the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria issuing decrees for naming and renaming separate geographical items is at work to ascertain precisely Bulgarian geographical names. The decisions of this commission have been adhered to by the Council for the spelling and transcription of geographical names while working out the index of Bulgaria.

Two volumes have already been published in Poland (A through J and K through P) with the names of settlements in Poland, and the names of other geographical items in the different districts of the country are being standardized.

The basic requirements for an index of this kind have been elaborated in Hungary; the scale of the map which is to be used (1:500 000) and the number of names (about 1500) have been determined.

The following indices in the series "UN Indices of Geographical Names - Czechoslovakia" have been published in Czechoslovakia: "Generally Accepted Czech Proper Geographical Names" and "Geographical Names from the Region Bratislava - Vidieck". The following indices are ready for publication: "Names of the Highest Geomorphological units in Czechoslovakia", "Names of the Natural Preserves on the Territory of the Slovak Socialist Republic" and "Geographical Names from the Trnava Region". Indices of the geographical names of Czechoslovakia and of the names of the mountains and valleys in the Slovak Socialist Republic have been outlined too.

The possibility for compiling lists with geographical names is being considered in Yugoslavia. For certain reasons it is thought expedient to compile these lists according to republics and districts and then proceed to a unified index of the geographical names of Yugoslavia.

4. Compiling and publishing toponymic reference works for the needs of map publishers, etc.

Taking into account the recommendation of the Fourth UN Conference to use the toponymic reference book of Austria as a model, Bulgaria asked Prof. Broy for a copy of this work. After it was received, it was multiplied and sent to all countries of the Tenth regional division which took part in the session. The decision was taken that every country would develop on its own a toponymic manual according to its purpose until the end of 1985.

Yugoslavia holds that due to its multinational make-up and the national minorities living in it the compilation of a toponymic reference book is a difficult task for it requires much time and effort. It is of the opinion that it will be able to prepare such a work by 1987 shortly before the opening of the Fifth Conference of the UN in Canada.

5. Compiling and renewing the indices of the names of the countries in the world and the problem of exonyms.

All member countries of the division have elaborated lists of the names of the countries in the whole world. Work on these lists has reached different stages. Czechoslovakia presented a copy of the List of Countries and Parts of their Territory printed by it to each of the countries taking part in the session.

On the problem of exonyms all participating states emphasized that they abided by Resolution 20 of the Fourth UN Conference on reducing the number of exonyms and their usage in brackets after the national form of a name.

6. Dictionaries of terms used on general geographic maps and in the international standardization of geographical names.

Czechoslovakia handed in to the other countries participating in the session an International Dictionary of Geographical Terms used for general geographic maps and produced by it. The decision was adopted that each country would present the equivalent translations in its official language to Czechoslovakia until June 30 this year, while the definitions of these equivalents can be translated by each country according to its needs if it wants to publish this dictionary in its official language as well.

The dictionary of technical terms which it was Poland's duty to publish is still being worked upon, and now the additional terms proposed by the UN will have to be included into it as well. All countries voiced their approval as to the proposal to include these additional terms. All additional terms are accepted along with their definitions. The opinion was expressed that the term Mother Tongue could be defined still more precisely by pointing out that this is the language which an individual uses best and most freely. It is considered that the term Vehicular Language could be made more precise by adding that it is not an individual's mother tongue.

7. Exchange of materials concerning geographical names standardization.

The general opinion was expressed that this activity must be stepped up. The interest for all materials presented by the participating states during the session proves the great significance of information exchange which is essential in work co-ordination on standardizing geographical names in the Tenth regional division.

In the separate countries of the Tenth division work on standardizing geographical names, as can be seen from the reports presented by them, is carried on and accounted for as follows:

In Bulgaria in the period between 1982 and the end of 1983 the Council for the Spelling and Transcription of Geographical names at the Central Geodesy and Cartography Office completed the following tasks:

1. Compiling and publishing of lists with geographical names and general rules for their transcription for 15 countries.
2. Compiling and publishing of a gazetteer of Bulgarian geographic names with their transcription with Latin letters.

The gazetteer is a second enlarged edition which has been worked out in accordance with the system recommended by the UN for transliterating Cyrillic with Latin letters.

3. Updating the list of countries and cities with a population above 500,000 in accordance with the Resolution No. 20 of the Fourth UN Conference on reducing the number of exonyms.

4. Regulating the activity of the Council for the Spelling and Transcription of Geographical Names by issuing an official normative document.

During the current period the following tasks have been worked on in Hungary:

1. Discussing geographic names in connection with the preparation of the new edition of the atlas of the world. Resolution No.20 of the Fourth UN Conference has been adhered to.
2. The previously published list of the most important names of the relief, regions and hydrogeographic items of Hungary and a list of the countries of the world.
3. Work on enlarging and specifying toponyms is carried on with the help of the local population.

4. In connection with the second edition of the map of the world on a 1:2,500,000 scale an instruction has been worked out for writing geographical names according to the requirements of international standardization.

In Poland two commissions carried on their work after the Fourth UN Conference (Geneva 1982): one on standardizing Polish geographical names from the whole world. The work of the former has been focused on ascertaining the designations of different geographic items on the basis of administrative divisions and of the names of wildlife preserves and hydrogeographic objects.

Work on geographic names standardization proceeded in two directions in Czechoslovakia: national and international standardization.

1. In the current period 75% of the geographic names of Czechoslovakia have been standardized.

2. Work on the International Dictionary of Geographical Terms for use in general geographic maps is carried on.

For the standardization of geographic names to be carried out on a scientific basis in Yugoslavia, a special dictionary will start being compiled with the UN Dictionary of Technical Terms serving as its basis. For the purpose of the second edition of the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia the decision was taken in 1982 for writing out geographical names on the maps in this encyclopedia. Similar instructions have been given to the respective organizations publishing maps, atlases and other cartographic publications. These instructions conform to the decisions taken by UN conferences.

As regards the item on the agenda dealing with reexamining the membership in the linguistic-geographical groups, we deem it necessary that the appurtenance of Albania, Greece, Cyprus and Turkey be determined with a view to accomplishing better the standardization of geographical names. Since there is a Roman-Hellenistic division functioning where these countries have been allotted, a final unequivocal definition of the composition of linguistic-geographical groups seems reasonable.

In connection with carrying out work in the field of geographical names standardization more effectively, and because of its tight connection with cartography, the decision was taken at the Sofia session to discuss possibilities for

a better organization of work along these lines at the forthcoming conference of geodetic institutions of the socialist countries. The decisions of this conference will help to improve qualitatively all activities connected with names standardization in the Tenth regional division.

