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Group of Experts on Geographical names

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Agenda Item 13

Report on the drafting of a new
"Statute" for the United Nations
Group of Experts on Geographical
Names.

(Paper presented by the Chairman)

On the drafting of a new "Statute"
for the UNGEGN.

INTRODUCTION.

1. Recent developments.

In 1979 during its eighth session the UNGEGN revised the "Aims, Functions and Modus Operandi" as adopted during the sixth session in 1975. The words "Aims and Functions" were deleted and the new heading read "Modus Operandi of the UNGEGN" (see Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, E/Conf.74/L43, Annex III).

During the ninth session a new statement on "Aims and Functions" was adopted, which subsequently met with some reservations at the Fourth Conference in 1982, though its provisions were sound enough (see *ibidem*, E/Conf.74/L44, Annex VI; Report of the Conference Vol.I, § 98).

Also during its ninth session "Rules of Procedure" for the UNGEGN were drafted, to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council for adoption (see *ibidem* E/Conf.74/L44, Annex IV). This draft was thoroughly revised by the Legal Department of the United Nations and subsequently in this form adopted by the UNGEGN during its tenth session, held in Geneva in 1982 (see ESA/RT/C/GN/8, Annex III). By these Rules of Procedure a great part of the "Modus Operandi" became redundant.

During the tenth session the subject of preparing a single document on all these issues was put forward. Also the Fourth Conference in its Resolution no.22 had recommended that the Group of Experts should examine the possibility of preparing a document combining and modifying, where appropriate, the separate documents referred to above. The expert from the USSR accepted to prepare a paper on the subject (see *ibidem* § 23).

At the eleventh session in 1984 this paper was presented to the Group of Experts as Working Paper no.37. An ad hoc Working Group consisting of Mr.Blok, Mr.Boginsky, Mr.Lewis and Mr.Randall, was invited to prepare a proposal on the question for discussion during the twelfth session of the UNGEGN. During the eleventh session they made a first evaluation of Working Paper no.37.

2. Why this paper.

This delicate matter does not lend itself to being treated by correspondence. On the other hand, to renew the discussion, where we left off in 1984, involves the danger that we might spend a lot of time on a subject that is not part of our real work, but is only preparatory to it. Too much of our time already is spent on side-issues as far as linguistic/geographical expertise is concerned.

Therefore a new Working-Paper, that may provide us with a new, more advanced starting-point for our discussion, may be of some use.

On the basis of the abovementioned documents and the discussions carried on during the eleventh session, this paper was prepared; it is meant to serve as a contribution to further discussion.

3. Guiding principles.

The guiding principles in establishing this draft were the following:

- a) according to the suggestion made by the expert from the USSR and by Resolution 22, to draft a single document, that will combine the existing ones and in the mean time will eliminate their contradictions and overlaps. For this the general framing given in Working Paper 37 could be followed.
- b) to maintain the Rules of Procedure as established during the tenth session; these Rules resulted of a laborious elaboration by the Legal Department of the proposals made by the UNGEGN, in order to bring them into line with the United Nations legal practises. It is not advisable to come forward now with new wordings.
- c) to do justice to the sound provisions contained in the "Aims and Functions" adopted during the ninth session and to the worthy proposals contained in Working Paper 37.

-) Item 13 of this document has now been replaced by Resolution 15, passed by the Fourth Conference; the UNGEGN has to implement this Resolution (see Vol. Report on the Conference, p. 33-34).

4. On "Voting".

In fact there is in this draft still a contradiction left, to wit between on the one hand item II.1, stating that agreement on technical matters will be achieved by consensus and not by voting, and on the other hand Rule 23, that leaves open the possibility of voting on such issues. It seems that current United Nations procedures do not allow of a provision as foreseen in II.1. If this proves to be true, I nevertheless propose to maintain the proposed wording. Though the Rules of Procedure undoubtedly prevail and the possibility of voting on technical matters exists, the maintenance of the principle expressed in II.1. voices our firm intention never to have recourse to this procedure.

5. The following example of how a "Statute" might be drafted, I present to the ad hoc Group and the Group of Experts for their consideration.

Statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. (Draft).

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was established in pursuance of the Economic and Social Council resolutions 715A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959, 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968 and 1854 (XLII) of 4 May 1973 to further the standardization of geographical names on both the national and the international levels.

I Aims.

The basic aims of the Group of Experts are:

- the consideration of principles and methods for solving the problems of national and international standardization of geographical names;
- the collection and dissemination of information on work of national and international bodies on the standardization of geographical names to the United Nations Member States;
- the sharing of experience of national bodies on the standardization of geographical names;
- encouraging the supply of scientific and technical help to developing countries in national standardization of their geographical names.

II Principles.

1. The Group of Experts acts as a collegiate, consultative body; accordingly agreement on technical matters will be achieved by consensus and not by voting.
2. The decisions of the Group are of a recommendatory character.
3. Questions involving national sovereignty will not be discussed by the Group of Experts.

III Functions.

To further the stated aims, it is essential that the Group of Experts on Geographical Names exercise the following functions.

1. Provide liaison between countries in their work on geographical names.
2. Co-ordinate the efforts of countries in the standardization of geographical names.
3. Undertake the preparatory work for periodic international conferences on geographical names.
4. Provide continuity of action between conferences.
5. Assist in implementing resolutions adopted at conferences.
6. Consider the formation of linguistic/geographical divisions as rational bases for furthering work at national levels.
7. Co-ordinate the activities of divisions.
8. Provide liaison between member countries and divisions.
9. Encourage the divisions and nations to take a more active role in standardization programmes. To this end, divisions should formulate their own working procedures and should co-ordinate them with the Group of Experts for the sake of assuring uniform content and principles. To the extent that divisions and individual nations become more active, the aims of the Group of Experts will be promoted.
10. Encourage divisions, wherever feasible, to participate in United Nations regional cartographic conferences. By having a divisional meeting in conjunction with a conference, ~~then~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ the divisions could also take advantage of the conference facilities. The latter possibility would have to be worked out in co-operation with United Nations authorities.

IV. Composition.

1. The linguistic/geographical divisions.

1.1. The Group of experts consists of experts in the field of cartography/linguistics, sent by the United Nations Members States and divided into the following linguistic/geographical divisions:

Africa Central Division

Africa East Division

Africa West Division

Arabic Division

Asia East Division (other than China)
Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division
Asia South-West Division
China Division
Dutch and German speaking Division
East Central and South-East Europe Division
India Division
Latin America Division
Norden Division
Romano-Hellenic Division
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Division
United Kingdom Division
United States of America/Canada Division.

1.2. The composition of the divisions may be revised, if necessary.

1.3. A country decides for itself to which division it wishes to belong. A country may also participate in the activities of other divisions than its own, provided the nature of its participation is not such as to change the linguistic/geographical character of the division(s) concerned.

1.4. Each division will select, by methods of its own choosing, an expert to represent the division as a whole at the meetings of the Group of Experts and to speak on divisional matters at the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names.

1.5. In order to guarantee the continuity of the work, each division having more than one sovereign State should select an alternative representative; the divisional representative will act in close contact with his alternate.

1.6. The divisional representative is expected to stimulate the standardization work within his division by all appropriate means, for example, correspondence (including correspondence with national surveying and mapping agencies), divisional meetings etc.

1.7. The divisional representative will be responsible for ensuring that the work of the Group of Experts and its potential for technical assistance are brought to the attention

of the individual countries within his division and for reporting to the United Nations any special problems within his division.

1.8. To discuss technical and procedural matters a division may organize regional meetings during United Nations conferences on geographical names and meetings of the Group of Experts or at any other convenient time.

1.9. Governments may appoint national experts to attend meetings of the Group of Experts on the understanding that the said national experts will have the right of voice and that their attendance will be co-ordinated with the expert who represents the division in question and who will vote on behalf of the division.

2. Officers.

2.1. The group of Experts will elect the following officers: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Rapporteur.

2.2. All provisions regarding their election and functioning are given below in the Rules of Procedure.

3. Working Groups.

3.1. Working Groups of specialists may be formed by the Group of Experts under the chairmanship of one of the members of the Group, to study particular problems between meetings of the Group of Experts.

3.2. To secure the effectiveness of the Working Groups:

- Working Groups will be established only where the tasks assigned to them have a direct bearing on the aims of the Group of Experts;

- The need for the existence of Working Groups will be reviewed at successive sessions of the Group of Experts for the purposes of continuing or terminating their mandates;

- Immediately after conferences, the Group of Experts will discuss and evaluate conference proceedings. Working Groups and their mandates will be evaluated. New Working Groups will be formed as required.

4. Specialists invited to a session of the Group of Experts.

The Chairman of the Group of Experts may, in accordance with the established procedure, invite persons with special knowledge on particular aspects of the standardization of geographical names, to participate in the sessions of the Group.

V. Rules of procedure.

(as contained in the report of the 10th session)
(ESA/RT/C/GN/8, Annex III)