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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES ON THE WORK OF ITS THIRTEENTH SESSION

(held at the headquarters of the International Civil  
Aviation Organization, Montreal, Canada, on 17 and  
31 August 1987)

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#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. In pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968, the Secretary-General invited the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to convene its thirteenth session at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization, Montreal, Canada, on 17 August 1987, prior to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, and to meet again on 31 August to review the recommendations of the Conference.

#### ATTENDANCE

2. The session was attended by 51 experts from 33 countries representing 15 of the 17 linguistic/geographical divisions of the Group of Experts. The list of participants is contained in annex I below.
3. The Chief of the Cartography Unit of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations Secretariat served as Secretary of the Group.

#### OPENING OF THE SESSION

4. On 17 August 1987, the session was opened by the Chairman, Mr. D. P. Blok (Netherlands). In attendance were the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Y. Velázquez García (Cuba) and the Rapporteur, Mr. A. Rayburn (Canada).

#### AGENDA

5. The Group adopted the following agenda:
1. Opening of the session.
  2. Adoption of the agenda.
  3. Reports of the working groups.
  4. Organization of the Fifth Conference.
  5. Review of the rules of procedure of the Group of Experts.
  6. Review of the Statute of the Group of Experts.
  7. Election of officers.
  8. Review of the recommendations of the Fifth Conference.
  9. Programme for the Group of Experts.

10. Review of the working groups.
11. Provisional agenda for the fourteenth session of the Group of Experts.
12. Other business.
13. Adoption of the report of the Group of Experts on the work of its thirteenth session.

#### REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

6. Brief oral reports were made by the convenors of the working groups.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

7. It was agreed that the election of the president of the Fifth Conference, the three vice-presidents, the Rapporteur, the editor-in-chief, the assistant editors and the officers of the three committees would, as recommended by the Group of Experts at its twelfth session, take place at the first plenary meeting of the Conference. It was further agreed that all representatives would be invited to participate in the work of each committee.

#### REVIEW OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

8. The Chairman proposed two important amendments to the existing rules of procedure of the Group of Experts (ESA/RT/C/GN/8, annex III). The amendments called for:

- (a) The replacement of rule 23 (Consensus), which read:

"Decisions of the Group, particularly on technical matters, shall normally be reached by consensus. In the absence of a consensus at a meeting, the Chairman may, and at the request of any member shall, put the proposal to the vote",

by the following text:

"1. On all except procedural matters, the Group of Experts, its linguistic/geographical divisions and its working groups shall arrive at decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus is not achieved, the matter shall be deferred for reworking and resubmission.

"2. In the absence of a consensus on procedural matters, the Chairman may, and at the request of any member shall, put the proposal to the vote";

(b) The addition of a new section, entitled "Documents" (rule 35), reading:

"1. The secretariat of the Group of Experts circulates copies of working papers submitted by linguistic/geographical divisions and experts to the participants in the session.

"2. Submission of a working paper for consideration by the Group of Experts does not mean the document has received the approval of the Group of Experts or that the working paper has been endorsed by them.

"3. Consideration of a working paper by the Group of Experts is without political significance.

"4. Consideration and discussion of a working paper by the Group of Experts must not be interpreted as support of, or opposition to, any political view or issue.

"5. Subsequent reference to the working papers in the report of the Group of Experts on the session likewise shall have no political significance".

9. It was agreed that the amendments to the rules of procedure should be submitted to the Conference for endorsement. 1/

#### REVIEW OF THE STATUTE OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

10. In view of the ongoing in-depth study of the United Nations intergovernmental structure and functions in the economic and social fields, the Secretary requested the Group of Experts to consider Economic and Social Council decision 1987/112 and recommendation 8 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations. 2/ An ad hoc study group was formed to consider the provisions of the decision and the recommendation that had a direct bearing on the aims and activities of the Group of Experts. It was to report to the Conference on the results of its work (see para. 26 below). The study group was composed of Messrs. Breu (Austria), Lewis (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Randall (United States of America), Orth (United States of America) and Rostvik (Sweden).

#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS

11. On 31 August 1987, in accordance with rules 5 and 6 of its rules of procedure, the Group of Experts elected the following officers:

Chairman: H. Dorion (Canada)

Vice-Chairman: A. Tazi (Morocco)

Rapporteur: P. J. Woodman (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH CONFERENCE\*

12. The Chairman said that, by resolution 3, the Conference had recommended the establishment of two new linguistic/geographical divisions of the Group of Experts: a Celtic Division and an East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic). 3/
13. He stressed the importance of resolution 4, by which the Conference called for an evaluation of the activities of the Group of Experts with a view to increasing its efficiency, and recommended that a working group on the subject be established (see para. 24 below).
14. In resolution 5, the Conference encouraged the organization of bilateral and multilateral meetings over and above those that already took place in the linguistic/geographical divisions. The Chairman said that such meetings might be arranged on a subject basis, to discuss, for example, automation or indigenous names.
15. With regard to resolution 6, the Chairman urged members of the Group of Experts to take the necessary initiatives with their national names authorities so that further action on standardization could be taken. If countries realized the importance of that work, the task of the Economic and Social Council in supporting it would be facilitated.
16. The Chairman was of the opinion that resolution 7 was of importance in facilitating the work of future Conferences. National reports should be prepared in an agreed format and submitted in ample time for distribution by the Secretariat to other countries, which would then have a proper opportunity to study them. Mr. Blok (Dutch- and German-speaking Division) proposed that the question of devising an agreed format or model for future national reports should be included in the agenda of the fourteenth session of the Group of Experts.
17. Mr. Lewis (United Kingdom Division) urged experts to ask cartographic agencies in their countries to take particular note of resolution 11, in which the Conference called for a clear typographical distinction on national topographical maps between toponyms and non-toponymic text.
18. With regard to the questionnaire on basic information on national standardization called for in resolution 12, the Chairman felt that Mr. Lewis, as convenor of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files, would be the responsible

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\* A list of the resolutions adopted by the Conference is set out in annex II below. For the texts of the resolutions, see Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Montreal, 18-31 August 1987, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.88.I.7 and corrigendum).

person within the Group of Experts to deal with the matter. Before the fourteenth session, a draft questionnaire could be formulated. When that had been accomplished and countries had supplied responses to the questionnaire, the Group of Experts would prepare a final document on the basis of the replies received.

19. Mr. Tazi (Arabic Division) and Mr. Kofos (Romano-Hellenic Division) were of the opinion that, to achieve the results called for in resolution 13, a better way of classifying exonyms was required. That would assist countries in identifying the categories which could be reduced.

20. The Chairman said that the preparation of concise national gazetteers, as called for in resolution 16, involved a vast amount of work and should be discussed at the fourteenth session.

21. With regard to the resolutions concerning romanization, the Chairman requested that any information on the implementation of systems and any difficulties encountered be reported to the Group at its fourteenth session. He said that resolution 21 on education and training was of great importance, particularly for the three areas most closely involved (East Africa, Latin America and North America). In order to ensure rapid, inexpensive and effective distribution by the Secrétariat, the semi-annual information bulletin called for in resolution 24 should be brief and could be typewritten. Each country should provide pertinent information to the Secretariat.

#### PROGRAMME FOR THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

22. The Chairman said that the programme for the Group of Experts essentially involved complying with the resolutions adopted by the Conference. Together with the Rapporteur, he would draw up a programme covering those recommendations. Mr. Blok (Dutch- and German-speaking Division) urged that the programme should include work on terminology, because although the working group had been disbanded there would still be additions and amendments in the future to Glossary No. 330/Rev.2 (Technical Terminology Employed in the Standardization of Geographical Names).

#### REVIEW OF THE WORKING GROUPS

23. The Chairman said that the task of the Working Group on a List of Country Names, with Mr. Ramondou (Romano-Hellenic Division) as convener, had been completed at the twelfth session. Three working groups remained: (a) the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files, with Mr. Lewis (United Kingdom Division) as convener, (b) the Working Group on Courses in Toponymy, with the Chairman as convener, and (c) the Working Group on a Single Romanization System for Each Non-Roman Writing System. In the continued absence of Mr. Földi (East, Central and South-East Europe Division), the last-mentioned working group required a new convener. It was agreed that Mr. Quinting (United States of America/Canada Division) and Mr. Breu (Dutch- and German-speaking Division) would act as co-conveners.

24. To comply with Conference resolution 4, a new working group would be established to evaluate the activities of the Group of Experts and assess the implementation of Conference resolutions. Mr. Randall (United States of America/Canada Division) would be the convenor, assisted by Mr. Lewis (United Kingdom Division), Mr. Kofos (Romano-Hellenic Division) and the Chairman. A report would be prepared for the fourteenth session of the Group of Experts.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE  
GROUP OF EXPERTS

25. The Chairman, the Rapporteur and the Secretary would communicate with each other in the near future to draw up a provisional agenda for the fourteenth session, which was expected to be held in August/September 1989.

OTHER BUSINESS

26. Mr. Randall (United States of America/Canada Division) reported that the ad hoc study group (see para. 10 above) had completed the task of formulating a response to the Economic and Social Council on the value of the work of the Group of Experts. The conclusions and recommendations of the study group were as follows:

(a) The Group of Experts should continue its activities, as it was the only body within the United Nations system that, during the period between Conferences, dealt with problems related to geographical names that could be addressed only at the international level;

(b) In its work, the Group of Experts was most productive and had achieved substantive results evaluated positively by the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names in their resolutions, which were endorsed by the Economic and Social Council;

(c) The Group of Experts should consolidate and promote those programmes that benefited national and international standardization;

(d) The Group of Experts should establish a working group to explore ways of increasing the effectiveness of programmes, rationalizing and simplifying relevant structures and functions and co-ordinating the efforts of the Group with relevant activities of bodies and organizations of the United Nations system;

(e) The conclusions of the in-depth study undertaken by the above-mentioned working group should be submitted to the Group of Experts at its fourteenth session for further consideration.

Notes

1/ For the rules of procedure as endorsed by the Conference, see Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Montreal, 18-31 August 1987, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.88.I.7 and corrigendum), annex V.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49), para. 24.

3/ According to rule 42 of the rules of procedure as endorsed by the Fifth Conference, no amendment [to the divisional composition of the Group] shall become effective until it has been approved by the Economic and Social Council.

Annex I

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Africa Central Division

(Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Zaire)

Mr. Paul MOBY ETIA (Cameroon)	Directeur adjoint de l'Institut des sciences humaines
Mr. Lazare MPOUEL BALA (Cameroon)	Premier Secrétaire Ambassade du Cameroun à Ottawa

Africa East Division

(Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia)

Mr. A. K. NJUKI (Kenya)	Assistant Director of Survey Ministry of Lands and Settlement
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Africa West Division

(Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo)

Absent

Arabic Division

(Algeria, Democratic Yemen, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan)

Division Chairman:	Mr. Abdelhadi TAZI (Morocco) (Vice-Chairman UNEGN)	Président Commission nationale des noms géographiques
	Mr. Abdelmajid HAKAM (Morocco)	Ingénieur en chef, Chef de la Division de la Cartographie
	Mr. Lahoussine AQUEDE (Morocco)	Ingénieur, chef du service de la topographie
	Mr. Soleman ALROBAISHY (Saudi Arabia)	Deputy Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources for Aerial Surveys

Asia East Division (other than China)

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Mr. Koichi TSUKAHARA  
(Japan)

Map Information Office  
Map Management Department  
Geographical Survey Institute  
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Division Chairman: Mr. Abdul Majid MOHAMED  
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National Bureau of Surveying  
and Mapping

Dutch- and German-speaking Division

(Austria, Belgium, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Netherlands, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland)

Division  
Chairman:

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	Mr. P. J. Woodman (United Kingdom) (UNGEEN Rapporteur)	Secretary Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use London
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	Mr. Alan RAYBURN (Canada)	Executive Secretary Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names
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Commission nationale des noms  
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Président  
Division arabe du Groupe d'experts  
des Nations Unies sur les noms  
géographiques

Annex IIRESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE FIFTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE  
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMESResolution  
numberTitle

1. Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names
2. Statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
3. Creation of a Celtic Division and an East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic)
4. Work performed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and its future activities
5. Bilateral and multilateral meetings
6. Promotion of national and international geographical names standardization programmes
7. National reports
8. Reports of international organizations concerned with the standardization of geographical names
9. United Nations publications
10. Co-operation with the Pan American Institute of Geography and History
11. Differentiation of toponyms from other map text
12. Collection of basic information on the national standardization of geographical names
13. Precedence of national official forms of geographical names
14. Publication of toponymic guidelines
15. Establishment of national geographical names authorities
16. Publication of geographical names in their national official form
17. Direct exchange of toponymic information between various computer systems

Resolution  
number

Title

18. Romanization of the Russian alphabet for geographical names
  19. Romanization of the Greek alphabet for geographical names
  20. Romanization of the Korean alphabet for geographical names
  21. Education and training
  22. Aboriginal/native geographical names
  23. National standardization manual
  24. Semi-annual information bulletin
  25. Features beyond a single sovereignty
  26. Vote of thanks
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