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Agenda item 4/5

ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON GAZETTEERS AND GEOGRAPHIC
NAMES OF THE PAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

**UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
14TH SESSION
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
May 17-26, 1989**

Agenda item 4, Reports by Liaison Officers

**ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON GAZETTEERS AND GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
OF THE PAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

Submitted by Richard R. Randall, USA, President of the Working Group

Since the 13th UNGEGN session in 1987, the Working Group has continued to promote toponymy among PAIGH countries by offering two courses in geographic names. The first course took place at the Cartographic School of the Inter American Geodetic Survey (IAGS) at Ft. Clayton, Panama, from October 5-16, 1987. A second course was held April 17-28, 1989, at the Instituto Geografico Militar (IGM) of Ecuador in Quito.

Attending the first course were 14 students from Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela. The president of the Working Group designed the course and taught most of the topics. Other instructors included Henri Dorion of Canada, Victor Ortiz of Mexico, Raul Lee Silva of Guatemala, and Rafael Petiton of IAGS. The basic elements of the course were: mission, function, and structure of national names authorities; the vocabulary of toponymy; field collection of names; office procedures; review of PAIGH-approved specifications for gazetteers; and exercises in staff and commission work. One post-class assignment was to prepare a list of designations (i.e., words designating basic types of geographic features), a definition of each word, and a code (i.e., a 2-, 3-, or 4-letter abbreviation of the designation) for geographic features in PAIGH countries. Another assignment was for students to write about their successes in applying lessons learned at the course.

The second course was attended by 19 students from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador (6 students), El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela. Mr. Miguel de Cano, former chief of the Venezuelan Direccion Cartografico Nacional, attended the first two days of the course and offered important guidance.

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The course resembled the first one but included some changes. A new section on Personal Computers was added. This item provided detailed instructions on how to apply automated data processing to national names programs, and it gave students exercises in operating the PC. Roger Payne of the US Geological Survey was the instructor. Another improvement concerned field collection of names. The first course offered rational but detailed methods of field work while the second course featured a simpler yet equally effective approach. Henri Dorion of Canada taught this subject. Annex A is the syllabus.

The teaching schedule was flexible. On the first day, for example, it was realized that participants had different ideas and terminology on the subject of "native" names. A separate session on the topic, under the leadership of Bedoya and Cano, helped resolve some questions. Some questions will require further investigation and Cano will work with PAIGH nations to prepare a final document.

Another assignment is to complete the list of codes and designations begun at the first course. Bedoya is responsible for this work. A third assignment is for students to examine the Directory of Agencies in Latin America Involved with Geographic Names (circulated at

the 5th UN Conference on Geographical Names) and send corrections to the president of the Working Group.

To give the students appropriate background information on geographic names, the president compiled a small library of documents. It included about 15 articles written by various experts, including an early statement on the nature of geographic names by Marcel Arousseau, for many years the Secretary of the British Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and a pioneer on principles and terminology of the field. Another document was the Manual on Establishing a National Names Commission, written by Donald Orth of the US Board on Geographic Names as a UNGEGN task.

Both courses proved the value of the PAIGH program for they brought to the students and their represented countries practical information and skills they can apply immediately. Instructors and students, however, fully realize the challenges to create or improve national names agencies. A major factor is the difficulty of obtaining funds to establish national agencies. Another factor, however, is that some countries may not yet fully understand how vital a names program can be. A principal goal of the Working Group is to persuade national authorities about the importance of names standardization.

Three organizations gave important support. PAIGH provided travel and per diem funds. IAGS also provided travel funds as well as technical services (local transportation, computer equipment, and simultaneous English-Spanish interpretation). And the IGM of Ecuador provided classroom facilities, customized maps for field collection purposes, transportation, and a briefing on the area visited for field collection.

The accomplishments of the Working Group clearly demonstrate that goals promoted by UN names agencies can be implemented by qualified regional organizations. Participants of the class returned to their countries with a new appreciation that "toponymy is the key to communications about the world." This is also the slogan of the poster prepared for the course (Annex B).

DAILY SCHEDULE OF CLASSES FOR COURSE ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

Presented by the PAIGH Working Group on Gazetteers and Geographic Names in Collaboration with the DMA Inter American Geodetic Survey

Host: Instituto Geografico Militar, Quito, Ecuador

Dates: April 17 - April 28, 1989

Hours: Morning classes start at 8:30 AM

Lunch: 12 Noon to 1:00 PM

Afternoon classes: 1:00 to 5:30 PM

Note: Numbers in parentheses following course descriptions are approximate number of hours dedicated to each topic. Times for some topics may be shifted if required.

Monday

April 17.

0. Introduction and Orientation. (2)

1. History and Nature of Geographic Names. Origin of names and their cultural significance. Linguistic evolution of names. Influence of historical factors on name changes. (2)

2. Geographic Names and Communications. Role of names in cartography. Role of names for non-cartographic purposes. Use of names for national planning, tourism, security, emergency rescue operations, post and telegraph services, and for overall communications. (4)

Tuesday

April 18

3. National Names Standardization. Requirement for standardized names. Role of central authority to decide standard names. Need for national law to establish names authority. Text of model law to define basic functions. Requirements for membership from federal agencies and other organizations. Need to create committees to deal with specialized topics. Requirement for continuous support staff. Possible need for collaboration with agencies at provincial or departmental levels. History of United Nations work on geographical names and influence on national programs. Programs of existing PAIGH names authorities. (NOTE: Students attending course for second time can report on assignment to describe how they applied new skills to national programs. Alternatively, reports from students at first course but not attending second course can be read.) (8)

Wednesday
April 19

4. Office Procedures. Forming an office to serve committee. Qualifications of staff. Functions of office, including work with names commission, press, academia, public, emergency calls. Publications (gazetteers, minutes of meetings, topics on toponymy of public interest, informational pamphlets). Establish reference files (maps, dictionaries, relevant texts and publications). Create and manage names files (manual and/or data bases). Classroom exercises. (8)

Thursday AM
April 20

5. Vocabulary of Toponymy. Specific and generic terms, codes, designations, and definitions. Problems of alphabetic sequencing. Variant names. Conventional names. Long-form and short-form names. Report on effort by Working Group to develop list of generic terms, codes, designations, and definitions. Format of cards for recording names data. (4)

Thursday PM and Friday
April 20 and 21

6. Geographic Names Information System. Introduction to automated data processing (ADP) for geographic names. Description of hardware and software used for a Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). Preparation of names information on cards (including field notes) for transfer to ADP. Extraction of names information from maps and charts. Production of names data bases to meet specified needs. Classroom exercises with ADP hardware and software. Guidance on establishing a national GNIS. (12)

Monday and Tuesday
April 23 and 24

7. Field Collection of Names. Principles, policies, and procedures for field collection. Preparation in office before field work. Field collection exercises. (16)

Wednesday
April 25

8. Office Processing of Names Collected in Field. Dealing with conflicts in field evidence. Using spoken and written evidence. Transferring field notes to file cards. Transferring card data to ADP. Office exercises. (8)

Thursday AM
April 26

9. Names and International Cooperation. Differing names of features common to two or more nations. Differing names of marine features contiguous to two or more nations and continuing into open waters. Undersea features. Collaboration with International Hydrographic Organization. Names conflicts and their resolution. (4)

Thursday PM
April 27

Gazetteers. Definition of gazetteers. Description of PAIGH specifications for gazetteers. PAIGH 1:250,000 Unified Hemispheric Mapping Program as source for PAIGH gazetteers. Status of national work on gazetteers. Variations of gazetteers: names according to map sheet, interim lists of names, special categories of names (populated places, hydrographic features, airfields). (4)

Friday
April 28

11. Function of National Names Commission and Support Staff. Exercises in student commission and staff work. Commission assignments for staff work. Preparing staff papers for commission review. Commission action: approval, deferral, rejection. Subsequent staff action. (4)

12. Course Review and Evaluation. (2)

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Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia
y
Servicio Geodésico Interamericano



**Segundo Curso en
Nombres Geográficos**
Instituto Geográfico Militar
de Ecuador, Abril 17-28 1955

*“Toponimia - La Clave para
la Comunicación Mundial”*

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