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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE UNGEGN AND UN RESOLUTIONS

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Convenor of the Working Group

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SUBMITTED BY RICHARD R. RANDALL, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, CONVENOR OF THE WORKING GROUP

MAY 1, 1989

INTRODUCTION

This is a report on responses submitted by 21 nations to a questionnaire circulated by the convenor of a working group* established by Resolution 10 of the 5th United Nations Conference. As shown by a copy of the resolution (Annex A to this report), the functions of the working group were to assess the effectiveness of the UNGEGN, review UN resolutions and report on their implementation, and submit a report to the 14th Session of the Group of Experts. Annex B is a copy of the questionnaire prepared by the convenor. The information in the report reflects responses to the questionnaire received as of May 1, 1989. Except in few cases, no responses concerned resolutions of the Fifth UN Conference.

The report has three parts: summary of information submitted, an evaluation of the information, and recommendations for further action.

Part 1. SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

As a preface it is important to note that the low number of responses may cast doubt on the validity of the survey. Further, the varying amount of information provided for individual questions made difficult any attempt to summarize answers in tabular form. Finally, not all questions were answered by each respondent. Nevertheless, the convenor believes the responses provide a useful picture of the effectiveness of UN names programs. (Some questions in the questionnaire are repeated below in abbreviated form. Some questions have two or three parts.)

* Members of the Working Group are Henri Dorion, Canada; Evangelos Kofos, Greece; H. A. G. Lewis, UK, and Richard R. Randall, USA and Convenor

Question 1: To what extent do UN resolutions promote national names programs?

Of 20 responses, 5 said "little," 11 said "some", and 4 said "very much."

Identify useful resolutions (Note: 1-2 means for that resolution 1, 2 countries responded)

Conf I	Conf II	Conf III	Conf IV
1-2	15-1	2-2	2-6
3-1	16-3	3-3	3-3
4-11	21-1	4-3	4-6
6-1	23-2	6-1	5-2
7-1	24-1	7-1	6-1
8-1	25-1	8-1	7-3
9-1	27-1	10-1	8-1
19-1	28-4	13-1	9-1
	29-3	15-1	10-1
	30-3	16-4	11-1
	31-4	17-2	15-1
	32-3	18-1	18-2
	33-2	19-4	19-2
	34-1	20-2	20-3
	35-1	21-1	24-1
	37-1	22-1	

Identify Groups of Resolutions (as listed in WP No. 7, 12th UNGEGN, Geneva, 29 Sep-7 Oct 86): 4-1, 5-1, 10-1. 13-1, 14-1, 18-1, 23-1, 15-4, 16-4

Question 2. Resolutions not of direct interest.

Conf I	Conf II	Conf III	Conf IV
8-1	5-1	8-1	8-1
9-1	6-1	9-1	10-1
10-1	7-1	10-2	14-2
11-1	8-1	11-1	15-1
12-1	9-1	12-3	17-1
13-1	10-1	13-1	22-2
14-1	11-12	20-1	
15-1	12-1	23-2	
16-1	15-1	24-2	
17-1	24-1	25-2	
	25-1		
	26-1		
	37-1		

Groups: 9-1; 16-1; 17-2; 19-4; 20-4; 23-1

Question 3. Resolution - Cancel/Revise.

Responses to this question varied considerably. About half of the responses identified resolutions which, for various reasons, were deficient.

Other countries said some resolutions should be combined, updated, replaced (partially or completely) by later resolutions, or revised to eliminate confusing or inadequate wording. A few countries recommended specific resolutions be incorporated by more recent resolutions.

Annex C is a table prepared by the convenor based on country responses and putting resolutions of the first four conferences into three categories: A (Acceptable and continue to be relevant); R (need revision, including combination with others); and N (no longer relevant and should be withdrawn or placed in archives).

Question 4. Factors impeding national implementation of resolutions.

Ten responses identified problems in implementing resolutions. The most common factor was a lack of national interest in creating a names authority (thus there was little or no capability to apply resolutions).

Some responses recommended how resolutions could be improved to overcome these hindrances. Suggested methods to improve effectiveness of resolutions are to eliminate "superfluous" resolutions and have resolutions directed to high-level national agencies.

Question 5. Do UN meetings spend enough time on useful topics?

Of 15 answers, 11 said "yes," 3 said "to some degree," and 1 said "no." NB: Three responses were from nations who rarely attend UN meetings.

Indicate topics that need more attention and indicate how to allocate needed time during meetings.

Only one nation commented on a need for more discussion on a topic, namely, methods to standardize minority names. The same nation sought smaller and less formal discussion groups as a means to utilize time more effectively. However, another country stated that concerns for minority names should be expressed and pursued only by nations.

Question 6. If you do not attend regularly, do you find that UN meetings deal with your national interests adequately?

Answers to this question were inconclusive. Only 4 of 15 responding nations have not regularly attended UN meetings and their comments could not be easily summarized.

Question 7. Do you feel UNGEGN Divisions are the best mechanism for promoting standardization?

Most nations responded "yes," but some recommended certain changes, including a modification of the UNGEGN membership and the creation of a new group based on national rather than divisional membership.

Question 8. What actions should UNGEGN carry out to assist your national program?

The 15 nations responding to this question gave a range of answers from "none" to: (1) requesting more international encouragement to promote the creation of national authorities; (2) calling for greater attention to the needs of developing countries; (3) asking for more technical aid; and (4) seeking a framework for "more developed" nations to discuss items of mutual interest.

Question 9. Should the UN names program collaborate more closely with UN regional cartographic conferences?

Most answered "yes," three answered "no," and one recommended working with the International Cartographic Association (to focus on "toponymic typography").

One recommended way of collaborating with UN regional cartographic conferences was to develop strategies to persuade heads of cartographic agencies to support national names programs. Another suggestion was to hold joint UN names and cartography symposia.

Question 10. Nations were invited to comment on the UNGEGN program and UN resolutions.

Most countries believed the UNGEGN was generally effective but there were indications the group could be more efficient. One area of greater effectiveness would be for the group to exert greater pressure on nations to establish authorities. Another recommendation was to develop an arena where responsible national names authorities (as opposed to divisional representatives) could discuss issues. A further suggestion was for the UNGEGN to restructure itself to assure greater benefits to developing countries while reducing time spent on topics of concern only to a limited number of countries.

As to UN resolutions, several nations expressed support for those dealing with romanization. One nation asked about the status of resolutions asking the UN for assistance: were dates assigned to report on actions? Is there agreement as to who benefits?

Another respondent asked that resolutions be addressed to appropriate national authorities to urge their support of names programs. Another nation stated that too many resolutions benefit only a small number of countries.

The reaction to UN resolutions varied considerably: some expressed satisfaction with them while, on the other hand, some felt too many did not address important issues. As noted in Annex C, there is common agreement that many resolutions need review or reclassification as no longer relevant.

PART II. EVALUATION

The report may be statistically invalid because it represents information submitted by only 21 nations. This is less than half of the 53 nations represented at the Fifth UN Conference on Geographical Names and no more than about 15% of the UN membership. Most replies came from countries active in UN names work, but some active nations did not respond. No information was received from nations of several divisions, including the Latin American, Arabic and African divisions.

Nevertheless, the responses revealed some patterns of opinions and recommendations for new directions. There is general agreement that the UNGEGN should be more effective in discharging its responsibilities. At the same time, recommendations for improving UNGEGN work varied considerably. One suggestion was to create a new structure based on national lines.

Several responses said that national names programs suffered from a lack of internal recognition and support. This situation seems to call for a greater emphasis on methods to alert national authorities to the importance of names authorities. While UN programs have promoted considerable progress in names standardization, it is perhaps surprising to realize that some countries active in UN work do not have names authorities.

The responses on questions about resolutions indicate that many are inapplicable or need revision. One comment was that there was no mechanism to determine whether resolutions were implemented.

Another comment was that voting on some categories of resolutions should be confined only to nations actively concerned with the topic.

The support to collaborate with UN Regional Cartographic Conferences indicates a view that UN programs need to seek additional avenues to promote names work.

PART III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Working Group needs to continue in order to complete its assignment.

2. Nations at the 14th UNGEGN who did not respond to the questionnaire should reply during the session.

3. During the 14th UNGEGN, the Working Group should meet as a first priority to analyze the report and additional responses and develop a statement for approval by the Group. The statement should be presented at the 6th UN Conference as a resolution, but ways of implementing recommended actions should be sought as early as possible.

4. Work performed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and its future activities

he Conference,

Recognizing the positive results achieved by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names,

Considering that during the period between United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names the Group is the only body within the United Nations system dealing with problems relating to geographical names at the international level,

Wishing to ensure that the activities of the Group are maximized at all times, and to consolidate those programmes that most effectively promote national and international standardization,

1. Recommends that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names continue to pursue actively its responsibilities as defined in its statute and in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the present Conference;

2. Recommends also that a working group be established within the Group to (a) evaluate the activities of the Group and investigate fresh approaches and new avenues to achieve its goals and objectives in the most efficient manner; (b) review the resolutions adopted by the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names and report on their implementation; and (c) report on its findings to the Group at its fourteenth session.

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

WORKING GROUP ON THE UNGEGN AND UN RESOLUTIONS

This questionnaire is designed to give respondents an opportunity to comment on the work of the UNGEGN and on UN resolutions as they relate to national and international names programs. Please answer questions as fully as possible and if desired, use additional pages for answers.

1. To what extent have UN resolutions or groups of resolutions promoted names programs in your country ? Circle answer below.

Little Some Very Much

If your answer is "some" or "very much," identify which resolutions or groups of resolutions have been particularly important to your names programs and briefly explain how they have been implemented. Suggested method to identify resolutions: IV/8 = Fourth UN Conference, resolution no. 8.

2. Do any resolutions or groups of resolutions appear to address categories of topics that are not of direct concern to you ? Please list resolutions below.

3. Some resolutions may require cancellation or revision because they are no longer relevant or have been replaced by later resolutions. Please identify such resolutions and also say why they should be cancelled or revised.

4. Are there any factors which make difficult the application of resolutions in your country ? Some factors might include ambiguous language of resolutions, inability to initiate and implement resolutions, or structure of concerned agencies. Please also indicate how resolutions could be improved to overcome such hindrances.

5. If you regularly attend UN conferences and UNGEGN sessions, do you feel they spend enough time on topics of direct importance to your country ?

Yes. To some degree No

If your answer is "no," please identify topics that need more attention. Also indicate how to allocate adequate time on such topics during meetings.

6. If you are not able to attend UN conferences or UNGEGN sessions, do you feel your national interests are adequately represented ?

Yes To some degree No

If your answer is "no," briefly identify national interests that may not be represented. Also indicate how your interests could be better represented.

ANNEX C

Opinions on UN Resolutions

Acceptable

Conference Resolution

I - 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12

II- 7, 8, 10, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36

III - 8, 10, 13, 17, 20

IV - 4, 10, 11, 12, 18, 21, 23, 24,

Review/revise

Conference Resolution

I - 3, 6, 8, 11, 16, 18, 19, 20,

II - 4, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 34, 35, 38

III - 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 21, 26

IV - 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25

No longer relevant

Conference Resolution

I - 2, 8, 13, 14, 15

II - 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 34, 37, 38, 39,

III - 1, 6, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27,

IV - 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 22, 26,