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REPORT FOR THE DUTCH AND GERMAN-SPEAKING DIVISION (DGSD)

Presented by Prof. E. Spiess, Zurich

UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

DUTCH AND GERMAN-SPEAKING DIVISION

Report for the Dutch and German-Speaking Division (DGSD)

presented by Prof.É.Spiess, Zurich

In connection with the 5th U.N.Conference on Geographical Names the DGSD held a meeting in Montreal on the 28th of August 1987. According to the rules of procedures of the Division a new chairman had to be elected for the period up to the next conference. Switzerland, represented by the Consul General in Montreal, accepted to take over the chair. Ernst Spiess had declared its willingness to act as chairman.

Since Montreal no other meetings were held. The chairman envisages to gather the Division during the 14th Session of the UNGEGN in Geneva. It has been announced that there will be also a change in the persons representing the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands. Dr.J.Sievers, Frankfurt am Main, will replace Dipl.-Ing.R. Böhme, who has served as an expert in the Division since 1977. Similarly Prof.Dr.F.J.Ormeling has taken over the duties from Prof.D.P.Blok, who as well has cooperated for many years in the work of the U.N. Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

The decisions taken at the meeting of the DGSD in Montreal have been communicated to the national bodies represented in the Division and to the StAGN, the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for the German language.

The members of the DGSD found it to be a convenient means to report in the Newsletters about actions that were taken in their respective countries and so did Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands. On the other hand there are also written reports presented to the 14th UNGEGN Session from the Republic of South Africa, the German Democratic Republic, from Switzerland and from the StAGN. To mention a few highlights: South Africa's National Placename Committee can celebrate its 50th anniversary. Work has made good progress for the second edition of their gazetteer. The GDR has published three new gazetteers, covering Sweden, Italy and Turkey. The FRG has published a digital database on some 600 German names in the Antarctica. The StAGN is continuing its work on a gazetteer for the Americas and has recently published a revised list of the names of states and their derivatives. In Switzerland a new initiative has been taken to coordinate the work of the 26 regional names authorities on the national level, activities that may end up in a proposal for a national names authority. The fact that nowadays 6 out of the 7 ministries have partial responsibilities for names and the complications caused by the four national languages seriously hinder the success of such a motion.

The Division has envisaged to discuss the problems involved in a glossary of exonyms. This will be done on the basis of the "Verzeichnis der Exonyme" that has been published by the "Ministerium des Innern" of the GDR. Within the Division further deliberations on a working paper on this matter, that has been prepared by the chairman, will be necessary. But first of all it must be clarified, what is to be understood by the term exonym in its strict sense in the context of these lists that are to be prepared.

It was intended to translate the U.N.Glossary of Terms used in the Standardization of Geographical Names into German. The expert in charge of this work had the impression, that many terms are included which are of no practical interest to cartographers, whereas others of daily practical use are missing. A draft for a revised glossary will be discussed in the Division. It may give rise to some proposals for amendments and additions that will then be put forward to the UNGEGN.