

United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names

15th Session

Geneva, Switzerland, 11-19 November 1991

Agenda Item 5, Reports by divisions, liaison officers, and experts

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

Submitted by Dr. Richard R. Randall, USA, President of the Working Group in behalf of the UNGEGN Liaison Officer, Lic. Eduardo Bedoya Benitez of Costa Rica.

Since the last UNGEGN session in May 1989, the Working Group continued to pursue its educational schedule. From November 26 to December 7, 1990 the Working Group presented its third course in Chile with facilities and support provided by the Instituto Geografico Militar in Santiago. Like the two earlier courses (in Panama in 1987 and Ecuador in 1989), the activity presented a wide range of subjects. Most students were from cartographic agencies in Chile, but others from Bolivia, Paraguay, and Chile also attended

A fourth course will take place in Mexico at the invitation of the Instituto Nacional de Estadistica, Geografia e Informatica (INEGI) in Aguascalientes from November 25 to December 6 of this year. Attending the course will be 17 students from INEGI and other offices as well as 6 students from Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama. In response to a circular letter requesting national support for the course, five countries offered to serve as hosts. This fact made a selection difficult, but for various reasons, Mexico was chosen. The chairman of the Working Group and Mr. Roger Payne of the US Geological Survey are the main teachers. Mr. Henri Dorion of Canada was one of the teachers at the first three courses.

The course in Mexico will be similar to earlier ones, and will follow the abbreviated syllabus included with this paper. Mexican authorities have asked for a special seminar concerning technical aspects of establishing a names office.

In addition to funding from PAIGH to cover major travel and living costs, host agencies provide local facilities, and countries sponsoring students also provide additional expenses. Credit must be given to all supporting organizations and to the agencies

employing the teachers who absent themselves from their normal assignments and who work with PAIGH bodies to make the courses possible. Major thanks are also due the Inter American Geodetic Survey, an element of the US Defense Mapping Agency, for its role in expediting communications with PAIGH member states.

The demand for the course is increasing as organizations within PAIGH member states see the advantages of a systematic treatment of names. The course represents an outstanding example of how local and regional organizations can cooperate to promote programs to standardize geographic names.

ABBREVIATED SYLLABUS FOR 4TH COURSE ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

Host agency: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática, Aguascalientes, Mexico

Dates: November 25 to December 6, 1991

1. Course Introduction and Orientation--4 hours
2. Nature of Geographic Names and their Linguistic and Cultural Origins --2 hours
3. Importance of Geographic Names in Communications--2 hours
4. Function of a National Names Authority--8 hours
5. Function of a Staff to Support a National Names Authority --8 hours
6. Field Collection--16 hours
7. Office Processing of Names Collected in the Field--8 hours
8. Automated Processing of Names--16 hours
9. Preparation of Gazetteers--4 hours
10. International Aspects of Names--4 hours
11. Seminar on the Creation of Names Office--8 hours
12. Course Review and Summary--4 hours