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Agenda item 3

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

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I am happy to report that the activities of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names have been continued and expanded at both national and international level since the Sixteenth Session of the Group in New York in 1992. The full scope of these activities is covered in the Divisional Reports, the reports of the Convenors of the Working Groups, and the reports of the co-ordinators of activities and publications. However, there are several aspects on which I would like to elaborate.

1. Implementation of Resolutions

The success of the activities concerning the national and international standardization of geographical names can only be assured if resolutions of the UN Conferences are implemented. With that in view, an article on the UNGEGN, its activities, and the resolutions on the standardization of geographical names, was written for the international *Handbook of Name Studies* being published by De Gruyter. In addition, a paper on the implementation of UN resolutions on the standardization of geographical names was presented by the Chairman at the Eighth UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 1993. Resolutions adopted at the six UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1967-1992), arranged alphabetically by subject, were distributed to delegates at the Conference.

To encourage the implementation of UN resolutions by the relevant authorities, this topic was included in the Presidential Address to the Seventh Southern African Names Congress held in San Lameer last August.

At the Eighteenth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences held in Trier in April 1993, a paper was presented on the Cambridge Dictionary of English Place Names. The editor of that Dictionary was urged to ensure that the recommendations of Resolution 4(E) of the First Conference were implemented as far as possible, to ensure the usefulness of the proposed publication for cartographers and other map editors at the international level.

A number of resolutions can be implemented by the experts themselves. For example, the Second Conference recommended the publication in a booklet of romanization systems adopted by the Conference. The publication of Toponymic Guidelines in a compendium has also been recommended. These and similar publications will do much to acquaint people worldwide with our work and assure its success.

2. Co-operation with Professional Institutions

In accordance with the efforts of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation to collaborate with technical and professional institutions, contact has been expanded with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the International Cartographic Association (ICA), the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), the Place Name Survey of the United States (PLANSUS), and the Australian National Place Names Project (NPNP).

2.1. The UN Economic Commission for Africa

Towards the end of 1992 the ECA requested the UNGEGN to be of assistance in the reactivation, revitalization and co-ordination of the geographic/linguistic divisions of the UNGEGN in Africa. A special session of the Eighth UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa in Addis Ababa in February 1993 was devoted to the standardization of geographical names. At the invitation of the ECA the Chairman of the UNGEGN prepared a background document on the status and problems of the activities on geographical names on the continent, providing proposals for lines of action to the African States, and presented it at the Conference.

The implementation of UN resolutions on the standardization of geographical names was addressed, the status and problems of geographical names activities discussed, and guidelines formulated for action by the African States. A report was presented by Mr Moskalkenko on the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and UN technical co-operation with developing countries.

After the closure of the Conference a meeting was held between Dr P. Mwanza, Chief of the Natural Resources Division of the ECA; Mr Orlando Nino Fluck, Chief of the Cartography and Remote Sensing Unit of the ECA; Mr V. Moskalkenko, Economic Affairs Officer of the UN Infrastructure Branch, Department of Economic and Social Development of the UN; and the Chairman of the UNGEGN. Strategies were discussed for future co-operation in co-ordinating toponymic activities in Africa, including liaison, education and training, and funding, and for the implementation of relevant UN resolutions.

2.2. The International Cartographic Association

As the result of interventions by Professor Ormeling, overtures for closer co-operation have been received from the ICA. Dr Fraser Taylor, President of the ICA, expressed the ICA's willingness to co-operate with the UNGEGN on co-ordination of Names Training Seminars and co-ordination in the area of digital standards.

He also offered the ICA's distribution of information capabilities, namely their Newsletter and their relationship with Elsevier Publishing to further the work on the standardization of names. The ICA could publish relevant reports in the newsletter and also suggest to Elsevier that important books related to names be published.

The ICA has two commissions on digital spatial data standards, one on the exchange of spatial data, and one on spatial data quality. Clearly as digital data bases of spatial data are created (roads, rivers, coastlines, elevations etc) digital data bases of geographical names will have to be interlaced with these spatial data bases. It has been suggested that the ICA commission on the exchange of spatial data take steps to include geographical names, and that the commission on spatial data quality should also include indicators that differentiate between officially sanctioned names and other names.

The offer by ICA will remain open for the future.

At the International Cartographic Conference in Cologne in May 1993 Professor Ormeling arranged a meeting between myself and Dr Roger Anson, ICA's chairman of publications. The possibility was discussed of publishing the UNGEGN Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors as a joint publication with the International Cartographic Association (ICA). A sample of guidelines has been sent to Dr Anson.

2.3. The International Council of Onomastics (ICOS)

At the 18th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences held in Trier in April 1993, the International Committee of Onomastic Sciences became an association for fee-paying members under the name International Council of Onomastic Sciences. Mr Botolv Helleland of the Norden Division was elected to the Board of Advisors and will thus be in a position to effect closer ties between the ICOS and the UNGEGN.

2.4 The Place Name Survey of the United States

Also at the ICOS Congress in Trier, contact was made with Professor Grant Smith concerning the Place Name Survey of the United States with a view to ensuring cognizance being taken and implementation of relevant resolutions in the determination of fields to be researched and included. It was recommended that Dr Roger Payne, the Rapporteur of the UNGEGN and member of the United States and Canada Division, should serve as liaison between the UNGEGN and PLANSUS.

2.5 The Australian National Place Names Project

A letter has been received from Dr John Atchison, Director of the Australian National Place Names Project, regarding multinational co-operation in such surveys as an important method of furthering toponymic education and implementing relevant UN resolutions.

3. Toponymic Education and Training

A UN Toponymic Training Course for the Africa South Division, funded by the South African Government, was held in Pretoria in September 1993. It was attended by participants from Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. A detailed report has been tabled by Professor Ormeling.

The Assemblies of the UN toponymic training courses in 1992 and 1993 represented Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. Both assemblies strongly urged the establishment of a Geographical Names Centre to promote toponymic education and training in the member countries of the Africa South Division and co-ordinate the Survey of Southern African Geographical Names. Discussions with the Secretariat of the UNGEGN have revealed that, if the Government of the RSA were to request the UN to establish such a Centre, and were to provide the infrastructure, the UN could provide funding, hire staff and provide technology for such a centre. The Executive Council of the University of South Africa has approved in principle the provision of the necessary infrastructure, and I have been informed that the South African Government has forwarded an application to the Economic and Social Council.

4. Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors

In pursuance of resolution 4 of the Fourth Conference, the Co-ordinator for Toponymic Guidelines requested the Secretariat to distribute a letter to all countries encouraging those countries which had not yet prepared Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other

Editors, to do so. Countries which had already submitted Toponymic Guidelines were encouraged to consider whether a later edition were required. In addition, a separate communication was directed at each member country of the Africa South Division. The topic was also dealt with at a meeting of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division in Cologne in May last year.

In pursuance of the resolution recommending the publication of toponymic guidelines in a compendium, it has been suggested that the UNGEGN publish the guidelines as a joint publication with the International Cartographic Association (ICA). A sample of guidelines has been sent to the Chairman of the ICA's Publication Committee.

Experts are once again urged to send copies of their Toponymic Guidelines to the Secretariat, who will forward them to me for incorporation in the published compendium.

5. Proposed UNGEGN Trust Fund or Foundation

The non-participation of developing countries in UNGEGN Sessions and UN Conferences has been attributed *inter alia* to a lack of funds. Such a situation is often of a sensitive nature, and identifying and categorizing indigent countries could cause offense. To address this problem, the Chairman proposes the establishment of a UNGEGN Trust Fund or Foundation. If the experts concur with such an effort, the UNECA would be willing to assist in the establishment of an extended UNGEGN Trust Fund or Foundation, to which experts from less affluent sectors could apply for subvention in order to participate in UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and UNGEGN meetings.

6. Newsletter

The UNGEGN Newsletter is our primary means of communication, and also an extremely valuable way of making our work known to the rest of the world. Without contributions from the experts and divisions, however, the Newsletter cannot continue. Experts will have noticed recently that there is a lack of contributions from most divisions and countries. On behalf of the Secretariat I am urging all experts to take the initiative in forwarding contributions for the Newsletter to the Secretariat.

7. Vote of thanks

I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretariat for consistent and prompt co-operation during my term of office, for all they have done in preparing the present Session, and for ensuring that contributions to the Newsletter were obtained and the Newsletter prepared. I also wish to thank the Vice-Chairperson, the Rapporteur, the Convenors of the Working Groups, the Chairmen and members of the Geographical/Linguistic Divisions, and all the other experts, for continuing the work of the UNGEGN during this time, for responding to my appeals where relevant, and for taking the initiative in a number of different matters.