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Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names

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Item 5  
of the Provisional Agenda

REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

REPORT OF THE AFRICA SOUTH DIVISION

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Prepared by Peter E. Raper, Head, Onomastic Research Center,  
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The Africa South Division, established in pursuance of Resolution 1 of the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, comprises experts from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

No divisional meeting was held during the period under review, but contact was maintained by correspondence.

#### **Botswana**

No report has been received

#### **Lesotho**

No report has been received

#### **Malawi**

No report has been received

#### **Namibia**

##### *Digitisation and Updating of Topographic Maps*

The map revision programme of the Division of Survey and Mapping took off in August of 1995 with the digitising of the topographical maps covering the Okavango region in the northern part of the country. Plans are already at an advanced stage to fly the area for the production of 1/80000 aerial photography and subsequently orthophoto maps which would then be used for the updating of the digitised maps. This project is being co-financed by Lux-development of Luxembourg.

##### *Namibian Land Information System*

The feasibility study for the establishment of Namibian Land Information System is presently in progress and is being carried out by six experts from Australia with funding provided by Australian Agency for International Development. Ultimately, the project is expected to come up with a variety of digital products including surveyed land parcels information system with attributes from the Deeds registry.

##### *Namibian Geodetic System*

Discussions are on to replace the currently used topocentric datum of Bessel ellipsoid with a geocentric datum of international standard such as WGS84. This will involve re-observation and re-adjustment of the Namibian geodetic network.

The Government of Namibia has enlisted the assistance of the UNGEGN in establishing a national geographical names authority.

## South Africa

### \* *National names authority*

The National Place Names Committee, South Africa's national geographical names authority, has functioned as an advisory body since its establishment in 1939. After the election in April 1994 of a Government of National Unity, the number of official languages was increased from two to eleven. This development may well have implications for the standardization of geographical names. The orthographic rules for African languages, formerly regulated by language boards for the individual languages, will henceforth be the responsibility of the newly-established Pan South African Language Board.

A memorandum has been submitted to Parliament recommending the establishment of a South African Permanent Geographical Names Commission with powers and responsibilities expanded as recommended by UN resolutions on the standardization of geographical names.

### \* *Advisory committees*

Two committees were appointed to advise Government, one on the names of State water schemes, and one on the names of international airports. In both cases names were depoliticized; entities named after politicians were renamed; where possible the original name was restored (e.g. Kouga Dam), or the entity was named after the nearest important city or town (Johannesburg International Airport).

### \* *Education and training*

.. From 31 July to 11 August 1995, an advanced United Nations training course on geographical names was held in Pretoria. Co-presented by Mr Roger L. Payne, Rapporteur of the UNGEGN and Executive Secretary of the USBGN, the course focussed on the establishment of a national geographical names authority, including field collection and office treatment of names, and computer processing of names. Participants in the course were from Mozambique, Namibia, the Sultanate of Oman, South Africa and Swaziland.

.. In pursuance of resolutions recommending education and training, the CAUSE Academy has established a Names Research Institute to initiate, stimulate, facilitate and undertake research into geographical names; to publicize and promote the work of the UNGEGN and the implementation of United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names; to provide education and training on geographical names; to provide guidelines on the standardization of geographical names; and to publish research findings and other documents.

## Implementation of UN resolutions

\* In accordance with recommendations of the 17th Session of the UNGEGN, the publication *United Nations Documents on Geographical Names* was prepared. Within two months of its appearance it had been purchased in eighteen countries. Thanks are expressed to the UNGEGN Secretariat, Professor N. Kadmon (Israel), Mr Randall E. Flynn (USA), and the Foreign Names Committee staff of the U.S. Board on Geographical Names, for providing

relevant documentation /assistance.

- \* An article on the UNGEGN was published in *Names Studies: An International Handbook of Onomastics*, Vol. 1 (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin. New York, 1995).
- \* A *Concise Gazetteer of South Africa* was published (HSRC, Pretoria, 1995).
- \* A report on the 17th Session of the UNGEGN was published in *Nomina Africana*, journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa, as well as in the Ehrensperger Report of the American Name Society.
- \* *Criteria for Proposed Names Changes*, a report to the advisory committees of State departments, provincial legislatures, transitional local councils, municipalities, and other authorities concerned with naming, was prepared by Dr L.A. Möller, based on United Nations resolutions and recommendations.

### **Swaziland**

A special session of the First World Congress on African Linguistics (University of Swaziland, 18 to 22 July 1994) was devoted to geographical names.