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REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Report of the Chairman of the United Nations Group of
Experts on Geographical Names

At the end of my current term as Chairman of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGN), I should like to give some account of my efforts to promote the work of UNEGN and the implementation of United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names.

I have chaired four sessions of UNEGN and promoted the work of UNEGN and the implementation of United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names in the following ways:

1. Publications

United Nations Documents on Geographical Names (Pretoria, Names Research Institute, 1996); prepared in pursuance of a recommendation made at the seventeenth session of UNEGN, resolution 13 of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and other relevant resolutions (purchased in 53 countries).

Co-author (together with E. R. Jenkins and L. A. Möller) of Changing Place Names (Durban, Indicator Press, 1995); based largely on United Nations resolutions.

"The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGN)" in Name Studies: an International Handbook of Onomastics (Berlin, Walter De Gruyter, 1995), vol. 1.



"National and international standardization of geographical names" in You Name It: Perspectives on Onomastic Research (Helsinki, Finnish Literary Society, 1997).

Reports on relevant aspects of the four UNGEGN sessions were published in Nomina Africana, Journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa, and in the Ehrensperger Report of the American Name Society.

First combined volumes of "Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors", as recommended in resolution 7 of the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (in preparation).

2. Conference papers

"The UNGEGN and implementation of United Nations resolutions on geographical names", presented at the Eighth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa, Addis Ababa, 22-27 February 1993.

"Standardization of geographical names from African languages", presented at the First World Congress on African Linguistics, Kwaluseni, Swaziland, 1994.

"The role of archives in the standardization of geographical names", presented at a seminar of the South African Society of Archivists, 28 September 1995.

"Standardizing geographical names in a changed society", presented at the Nineteenth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Aberdeen, Scotland, 1996.

"The United Nations and the standardization of geographical names", presented at the International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 11-13 June 1997.

3. Geographical/linguistic divisions

In pursuance of resolution 1 of the Sixth Conference, I was instrumental in the establishment of the Africa South Division, comprising Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. Training courses in toponymy

I arranged five UNGEGN toponymic training courses in South Africa, in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996 and 1997. Lecturers included the following UNGEGN experts: Helen Kerfoot (Canada), N. Kadmon (Israel), F. J. Ormeling (Netherlands), Lucie A. Möller (South Africa) and Roger L. Payne (USA). Participants were from Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Oman, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia.

5. International consultation

I was requested by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 1992 to assist in revitalizing and coordinating geographical names activities in Africa. I presented to the Eighth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa a background document on the status and problems of geographical names activities, providing proposals for lines of action by the African States.

I provided guidance to the Governments of Finland, Mozambique, Namibia and Sierra Leone on the establishment of national names authorities and served as chairman of a working forum in reconstituting that of South Africa.

I am currently negotiating with Microsoft Encarta for inclusion in that atlas of geographical names standardized nationally by the States Members of the United Nations in implementation of relevant resolutions on the standardization of geographical names.
