

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

Geneva, 4-22 September 1967

**Vol. 2. Proceedings of the Conference
and technical papers**



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Part I
PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PLENARY MEETING¹

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 4 September 1967, at 3.5 p.m.

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Acting President:

Mr. VELEBIT (*Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe*)

President:

Mr. BURRILL (*United States of America*)

Rapporteur:

Mr. GOMEZ DE SILVA (*Mexico*)

Executive Secretary:

Mr. URETA

Deputy Executive Secretary:

Mr. CHRISTOPHER (*Secretariat*)

Opening of the Conference

[Agenda item 1]

The ACTING PRESIDENT, on behalf of the Secretary-General, welcomed the participants in the Conference.

The question of the standardization of geographical names had been before the Economic and Social Council since 1953 and had been studied at regional cartographic conferences for Asia and the Far East and for Africa respectively. In 1958, a draft programme for achieving international uniformity in the writing of geographical names had been circulated to all States Members of the United Nations; most countries had expressed the view that the immediate task of standardization should be performed on the national level. In 1959, under Council resolution 715 A (XXVII), the Secretary-General had been requested to set up a small group of consultants to consider the technical problems of domestic standardization of geographical names. The report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names established pursuant to that resolution, which was before the Conference,² dealt with four topics: the need for standardization; problems of domestic standardization; recommendations on problems of such standardization; and the question of convening an international conference. As a result of the group's conclusions on the last-mentioned topic, the Council, by its resolution 929 (XXXV), had requested the Secretary-General to consult with Member States on the

¹ The original text of this record was issued as document E/CONF.53/SR.1.

² See annex, p. 151.

desirability of convening such a conference and on the date, place and tentative agenda. In the light of the Secretary-General's consultations, the Council had decided at its thirty-ninth session that a conference should be held in Geneva in 1967.

The Group of Experts on Geographical Names had been reconvened at a preparatory meeting in March and April 1966; the report on that meeting was before the Conference.³ The group had considered the provisional agenda for the Conference and had reviewed all the comments received on the subject from Governments since 1956. It had been agreed that the rules of procedure for the Conference should be those used at the United Nations Technical Conference on the International Map of the World on the Millionth Scale, held in Bonn in 1962.⁴ The group had also considered it desirable that the Conference should be discussed at the regional level, and items relating to geographical names had been included in the agenda of the second United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa, held in Tunis in September 1966,⁵ and of the fifth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East, held in Canberra in March 1967.⁶

The adoption of a uniform standard method of writing geographical names involved two basic questions: standardization of the form of geographical names by the country concerned, and adoption of standard methods of transliteration or transcription. The first question involved standardization at the national level; the second, adoption of general principles for international standards. The Conference would no doubt provide guidance on international methods of transliteration and on international co-ordination and liaison. He wished the Conference every success in helping to further the purposes of the United Nations.

Adoption of the rules of procedure

[Agenda item 2]

The ACTING PRESIDENT drew attention to the proposal in paragraph 5 of the report of the Group of Experts that the rules of procedure for the Conference should be those of the United Nations Technical Conference on the International Map of the World on the Millionth Scale with two minor amendments. Under the first amendment, rule 3 would provide for a credentials

³ See *United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. 1 (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.I.9), annex III, pp. 20-22.

⁴ See *United Nations Technical Conference on the International Map of the World on the Millionth Scale*, vol. 1 (United Nations publication, Sales No.: 64.I.4), pp. 11-14.

⁵ See *Second United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa*, vol. 1 (United Nations publication, Sales No.: 67.I.20).

⁶ See *Fifth United Nations Regional Conference for Asia and the Far East*, vol. 1 (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.I.2).

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PLENARY MEETING¹

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 5 September 1967, at 10.20 a.m.

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President:

Mr. BURRILL (*United States of America*)

Election of officers

[Agenda item 3] (*continued*)

Mr. KHAMASUNDARA (Thailand) nominated Mr. Lambert (Australia) for the office of Chairman of Committee I on National Standardization Programmes.

Mr. GLEDITCH (Norway) seconded the nomination.

Mr. Lambert (Australia) was elected Chairman of Committee I by acclamation.

Mr. MARTY (Cameroon) nominated Mr. Gall (Guatemala) for the office of Chairman of Committee II on Geographical Terms.

Mr. DROLET (Canada) seconded the nomination.

Mr. Gall (Guatemala) was elected Chairman of Committee II by acclamation.

Mr. SPIESS (Switzerland) nominated Mr. Lewis (United Kingdom) for the office of Chairman of Committee III on Writing Systems.

Mr. SUNTHAN (Cambodia) seconded the nomination.

Mr. Lewis (United Kingdom) was elected Chairman of Committee III by acclamation.

Mr. AMER (United Arab Republic) nominated Mr. Buru (Libya) for the office of Chairman of Committee IV on International Co-operation.

Mr. BURU (Libya) observed that it would be difficult for him, as the sole representative of his country, to serve as chairman of a committee. He nominated Mr. Ayoubi (Lebanon).

Mr. LINDQVIST (Sweden) nominated Mr. Fraser (Canada).

Mr. MAHIAR-NAVABI (Iran) seconded the nomination of Mr. Fraser.

Mr. ORMELING (Netherlands) nominated Mr. Spiess (Switzerland).

Mr. SPIESS (Switzerland) stated that, to his regret, he could not accept candidature because acceptance of the office of chairman would be contrary to his country's policy in international organizations.

The PRESIDENT noted that only one nomination had been seconded. If there were no objections, he would take it that Mr. Fraser (Canada) had been elected Chairman of Committee IV.

It was so decided.

Reports by Governments on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names

[Agenda item 7]

The PRESIDENT invited delegations to report on the progress made by their countries in the standardization of geographical names.

Mr. LAMBERT (Australia) said that, in recent years, the activities of the United Nations had given impetus to action by the Australian state governments which, with the territory administrations, were responsible for place names. Some co-ordination of national efforts had been effected by the National Mapping Council of Australia on which all the governments and administrations were represented. Gazetteers were being prepared; the annexes to the report submitted by his country under item 7 showed the principles of organization applied and the addresses of the various authorities responsible for the work in progress.

One particular problem encountered had been that of unwritten names, which had been used in the past without any definite system. Efforts were being made to rectify that state of affairs. In New Guinea, for instance, an attempt was being made to preserve for posterity the names used by the indigenous population.

Mr. BREU (Austria) said that Austria had to deal with two types of geographical names: those of inhabited places, and others. Names in the first category were fixed either by provincial government law or by communal decree. Every ten years, the names were printed in the official gazetteer published by the Central Statistical Office. Names in the second category were fixed by the survey group of the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying, which was free to make its own decisions and was guided only by local tradition.

The most important achievement of the past years had been that, in the sheets of the official 1:50,000 map published since 1961, the names of inhabited places conformed exactly to those published by the Central Statistical Office. A problem still to be resolved was that of determining the names of fields, meadows, mountains, rivers and other features encountered during field work by the surveying staff. The Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying urgently needed the help of toponymic committees to produce uniform and scientifically correct work. Only one such committee existed, so far, in Vorarlberg, but others were to be set up in due course.

¹ The original text of this record was issued as document E/CONF.53/SR.2.

Mr. ASSAYE (Ethiopia) said that the Imperial Ethiopian Mapping and Geographical Institute was continuing to collect and standardize place names, using Amharic, the national language. The language was a phonetic one with an alphabet of about 231 letters, including thirty-three consonants with seven vowel forms for each consonant. The simplified system used for transliterating the alphabet into English had been described at the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference held in Nairobi in 1963 and had been published in the report of that Conference.³ Field parties were collecting and transliterating names according to that system. A start had been made on compiling glossaries of geographical terms and standardizing names of administrative areas and sub-regions. It was hoped that a gazetteer and glossary could be published in the near future. A committee set up within the Mapping and Geographical Institute was working on the question of standardization at the national level; the information acquired at the current Conference would be extremely useful to that committee.

Mr. MEYNEN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the spelling of place names was a matter for official decision by the *Länder*. The names of geographical entities had not, as a rule, been the subject of official decisions, but their inclusion in official maps gave them a certain official character.

The Standing Committee on Geographical Names, set up in 1959, was responsible for co-ordinating and promulgating the rules for domestic standardization of names and for publishing results. In 1966, it had published the first volume of the official Duden gazetteer, which gave the correct official spellings recommended for domestic use.

Mr. NURMI (Finland) said that close and regular co-operation was maintained between cartographers and toponymists in his country. The National Board of Survey was responsible for the preparation of Finnish maps, including the field collection of names, the selection of names for the maps, and—since Finland was bilingual—their submission for revision, before printing, to the Finnish Name Archives or the Swedish Society for Literature in Finland. Names were corrected and checked against collections of geographical names, maps and other information available in the name archives and guide-books.

The field collection and office treatment of place names from all over Finland were comprehensive tasks involving most of the problems mentioned in the report of the Group of Experts. A total of 700,000 names had already been collected for the compilation of basic maps on the scale of 1:20,000. The compilation should be completed in the early 1970's and would include more than 1 million names; it would form the basis for the names on smaller-scale maps.

Particular attention had been paid to the standardization of geographical names in a new 1:1 million scale map now being prepared. The main purpose of the new map was to show the location of the most important places in Finland, which totalled some 8,000. Maps of that type would undoubtedly be of assistance to cartographic agencies in other countries in constructing their maps of Finland.

Mr. NEDELEC (France) said that, although France had long been studying the problems involved in standardizing geographical names, his Government had not submitted a comprehensive report on its activities in recent

years. It had, however, communicated with the Secretariat on individual items of the agenda, in particular item 9(b), (c), (d) and (f).

Mr. GALL (Guatemala) said that the National Geographical Institute of Guatemala had started work on standardizing geographical names in May 1956. In 1958, work had begun on a geographical dictionary. To put an end to confusion in geographical names, a presidential decree had been issued in 1959 to the effect that only names appearing in the records of the National Geographical Institute should be considered official.

Following the adoption of the recommendations of the Group of Experts in July 1960, a joint Commission on Geographical Names had been set up in Guatemala. The geographical dictionary of Guatemala, published in two volumes in 1960 and 1961, contained the geographical names standardized up to the time of its publication. The standardized names also appeared on the 1:1 million and larger scale maps.

In 1965, the National Geographical Institute had published his paper entitled "*Contribución a los nombres geográficos de Guatemala*", which comprised a philological study of the region, the rules guiding the Joint Commission on Geographical Names, and examples of resolutions on standardization.

The supplement to the geographical dictionary, covering the years 1961 to 1964, had been completed in 1965 and was now being printed in two volumes of over 400 pages each. It contained several hundred new geographical names, cross-references to historical names no longer in use, and new terms and definitions. Work on the next supplement, covering the years 1964-1967 and based on 1964 census data, was under way and more than 8,700 names were ready for immediate reference.

Several Central American countries had asked for help regarding methods and specifications for use in preparing their own geographical dictionaries. As an official of the National Geographical Institute, he had visited El Salvador and Honduras in 1966 and Costa Rica in 1967, and those countries were now preparing their geographical dictionaries in the light of Guatemala's experience.

Mr. POLSPOEL (Holy See) said that, although the Holy See, by reason of its special character, had not taken an active part in the standardization of geographical names, it was following progress with interest. There existed, however, a centre for the study of religious toponymy which had recently been given official recognition by the Holy See and which adhered to the International Geographical Union.

Mr. VADIIE (Iran) referred to the new measures being taken in his country, in particular the establishment of committees under the Ministry of the Interior, the Geographical Department at Army Headquarters and the Geographical Institute of the University of Teheran. Three lists of names had already been published by government bodies and would shortly be revised. A climatological map and atlas were in course of preparation by the Army Geographical Department and the Geographical Institute.

In the process of standardization, attention was being paid to historical documents as well as to geographical names and terminology. In Iran, which was one of the oldest countries in the world and therefore rich in historical material, the standardization of geographical names was of particular importance. In that connexion, he had noted

³ See *United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa*, vol. 2 (United Nations publication, Sales No.: 66.I.13), p. 65.

sixty indigenous languages in Mexico, and the intention was to investigate the etymology of indigenous place names. Another subject for standardization consisted of the generic names used to describe such geographical features as bays or mountains.

Mr. ORMELING (Netherlands) said that since the Netherlands was a very small country with close international economic relationships, many Dutch variants of foreign names had come into use, and a Permanent Board on Foreign Geographical Names had recently been set up to standardize them.

Mr. DAHLBERG (Netherlands), speaking as a representative of Surinam on the Netherlands delegation, said that the problems confronting Surinam with regard to the standardization of geographical names were much more complex than those faced by the Netherlands. Surinam had a multinational population and a corresponding variety of geographical names. In 1960, the Government had appointed a commission on geographical names to standardize rules for such names. A commission on the spelling of the Creole language had also been set up and had standardized all geographical names of Afro-American origin.

Mr. GLEDITSCH (Norway) said that, since the 1890s, the Royal Ministry of Education, assisted by an officially appointed Board of Advisers, had been responsible for the standardization of geographical names in Norway and in the Norwegian Arctic and Antarctic territories. It was the task of the Board of Advisers to advise all government offices and institutions on the spelling of geographical names. In 1913, special instructions had been issued to the effect that all Norwegian place names should be written in accordance with an orthographic system suitable for the standardization of genuine Norwegian dialect material. All later rules were derived from those instructions, and the latest instructions, issued in 1933 and 1957, dealt with specific details of standardization. The board's work had been based on a twenty-volume compilation of Norwegian farm names. Since 1940, all names on new topographic maps had been written in phonetic script and checked by specialists, and standardization of the written forms on the maps was based on that material. There was a special government adviser on Lapp place names, for in northern Norway there were many places with two different names, one Lapp and one Norwegian. Plans had been worked out for a national gazetteer based on 1:250,000 maps. The Norwegian Polar Institute applied the official rules for the standardization of place names in the Arctic and Antarctic areas. Names of special

features originally given by explorers of other nationalities were seldom changed. The national names authority was the Board of Advisers on Place Names, and the executive authority was the Royal Ministry of Education. The Norwegian Place Names Archives were responsible for the collection of place-name material, and directed research work in that field. The Scandinavian countries maintained close collaboration in the standardization of geographical names.

Mr. MARTINS (Portugal) said that no great difficulties had arisen in Portugal with regard to the standardization of geographical names, since the competent cartographic departments maintained close collaboration with one another. He hoped that a national authority would soon be established to ensure standardization.

Mr. ROSU (Romania) said that the standardization of geographical names had been receiving attention in Romania for some considerable time. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Romanian Geographical Society had drawn up a geographical dictionary for the country. Serious attention had recently been given to the subject, and detailed studies had been carried out by geographers and cartographers. An administrative organ had been set up in 1952 to collaborate with the specialists in work on place names, and an official gazetteer of such names had appeared in 1956. The national organization now dealing with the subject was the National Geographical Committee, which included a sub-committee on geographical names. Many maps on different scales had recently been published, as well as linguistic atlases, an encyclopaedic dictionary and a preliminary glossary of generic names. The practical task of standardization could now be considered almost complete; it remained only to unify certain generic geographical names, to verify the names of certain topographical details, to draw up a bibliography on the subject and to put the glossary of generic names in final form.

Mr. PEREZ GALINO (Spain) said that the national body responsible for the study of toponymy was the Superior Geographical Council, under which the Commission on Geographical Names carried out its work on the basis of the recommendations of the United Nations Group of Experts. The problems involved were relatively simple and concerned mainly the cartographic aspect of the subject. All geographical names on the standard map of the country were currently being revised, and a special commission had been established to revise cartographic symbols.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

Chief Administration of Geodesy and Cartography, which had set up a permanent transcription committee. The rules for transcription were now laid down in 103 sets of instructions: fifty-eight for the Soviet Union and forty-five for foreign countries. Later in the Conference his Government would provide more detailed data, including samples of the documents used in its geographical and cartographical work. He hoped that, as a result of the Conference some system could be developed for providing the United Nations, at regular intervals, with information concerning changes in geographical names.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) said that his delegation's report was in two parts, the first dealing with England, Wales and Scotland and the second with Northern Ireland and overseas territories. His country's national mapping authority was the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain, which was responsible for geographical names in England, Scotland and Wales and published them in its well-known Ordnance maps at 1:2,500. A gazetteer was also published, but only at 1:250,000. In recent years there had been a tendency to use Welsh and Gaelic names for places in Wales and Scotland respectively rather than the English names formerly used. Northern Ireland produced its own large-scale maps and was responsible for the collection and publication of names of its territories.

Mapping of overseas territories was carried out by the Directorate of Overseas Surveys, which was a part of the Overseas Development Ministry. Names policy was defined by the appropriate authority within the territory concerned.

Encouragement was given to the establishment of place-names authorities. Thus, in the British Solomon Islands dependencies a geographical names committee had been established for the collection and recording of geographical names. The British Antarctic Place-Names Committee was similarly responsible for geographical names in the Antarctic.

Other bodies concerned with the recording and spelling of geographical names were the Directorate of Military Survey, which produced medium-scale and small-scale maps as well as aeronautical charts, and the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty, which was responsible for the production of nautical charts and other navigational documents. Both bodies followed the rules for spelling laid down by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names. That committee was composed of representatives from a number of government departments and learned societies. Its function was briefly, to formulate transliteration and transcription of place names and to carry out the processing of names in certain cases.

Mr. PEARCY (United States of America) said that the United States Board on Geographic Names had already dealt with some 50,000 domestic names; about 1,000 were being added each year. The board's work included the statement of general principles and their incorporation in established policy. Two gazetteers had been published, one for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and the other for Hawaii, but unfortunately both were out of print. Two other gazetteers had recently been issued, for Alaska and the state of Delaware, and were obtainable from the Superintendent of Documents in Washington, D.C. Other documents would be placed on exhibition during the Conference.

His Government's files contained between 2.5 and 3 million standard foreign names, together with about 1 million cross-referenced variants. There was a file on

every part of the world, which was revised and enlarged over a ten-year cycle. Foreign names appeared in more than 100 gazetteers, a list of which would be distributed to participants in the Conference.

The report submitted by his Government described the various methods used for the transliteration of names from languages not written in the Roman alphabet. Agreement had been reached on the spelling of those names after joint studies with the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for United Kingdom official use, and in some cases after direct discussion with the countries concerned.

More than twenty years earlier, the United States Board on Geographical Names had undertaken a study of all the names ever given to geographical features in the Antarctic; shortly afterwards, it had begun to discuss them with the other countries concerned, and a large measure of agreement had already been reached.

The study of undersea names, which was still in the early stages, was being discussed in the International Hydrographic Bureau and the General Bathymetric Committee on Oceanography.

Miss BIDART DE LOPEZ (Uruguay) observed that the problem of geographical names in her country had developed in the course of its long history. Certain names, both in Spanish and in other European languages, had appeared during the age of discovery and the colonial era; others had been used by the various indigenous tribes; and frequently their use had overlapped. The inevitable result had been a highly varied terminology, in which certain terms had come to be considered official despite the doubts entertained by scholars. A Geographical Institute had been founded as early as 1843 and a geographical dictionary of Uruguay had been published early in the twentieth century, but an enormous task still remained to be done. A number of private institutions were already co-operating in that task and her Government was, of course, keenly interested in any technical assistance available from the United Nations. The Organization's work on the standardization of geographical names had her delegation's full support.

Mr. EREN (Turkey) said that work on the standardization of geographical names in Turkey had begun some fifteen years previously. Preliminary action had been undertaken by the Cartographic Service, but the need for co-ordination had soon made it necessary to set up a Special Committee on Geographical Names under the Ministry of the Interior; the committee consisted of cartographers, geographers, historians and linguists, and the Cartographic Institute, the Turkish language Association and the Statistical Institute played an important auxiliary part in its work. Measures taken after the dissolution of the Ottoman empire had made the task somewhat easier, since the territory now occupied by the Republic of Turkey had always been populated by Turks and most place names were Turkish. Nevertheless, considerable difficulties had been created by the adoption of the Latin alphabet in the new Turkish State and by the fact that some topographic features had two or three different names. The special committee had overcome the principal difficulties in that regard, and the Ministry of the Interior had published a preliminary compilation of topographic features, province by province. The committee was also preparing a nomenclature which, when completed, would result in the standardization of geographical names at the national level. The Cartographic Service, to which the committee's work was regularly transmitted, took it into account in publishing new Turkish maps.

geographical names listed in section II of the first report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names.² He first invited comments on problem (a).

Mr. LAMBERT (Australia) said that the practice in his country was to investigate records of early explorations, surveys and land-settlement documents. If the local usage did not differ too widely from the names in those documents, the original name was used but, if the difference was appreciable, the name used in common practice was retained.

Mr. EMMANUEL (Ethiopia) said that, in his country, when mapping parties were sent out to the field, they first approached the local administrator who spoke the national language, and often the local dialect. The latter convened knowledgeable informants from the surrounding area. When place names had been collected in the field, they were brought back to the Institute of Mapping and Geography; the leader of the field party made the transcription into Amharic on the spot. Transliteration from Amharic into English was carried out in the office. Names were then recorded, both in Amharic and English, on standard card forms, mainly for mapping purposes.

Mr. BREU (Austria) said that, in his country, land surveys strictly followed contemporary local usage for geographical names, disregarding old documents except in cases where the topographic feature was very extensive and the literary standard was very old and could not be altered.

Mr. KOMKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) acknowledged that discrepancies between local and official versions of geographical names presented some difficulty. In the USSR, priority was given to official names, but great care was taken to reflect local appellations in official documents, so that the names should be comprehensible to the local population. Discrepancies were thus largely eliminated.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (b).

Mr. FRASER (Canada) said that, because of the variety of physiographic features, the naming of larger features—especially those whose limits were not clearly defined—sometimes required discussions between physiographic experts and surveyors and, where coastal regions were involved, consultations with specialists in international law. Although such larger features were not always of concern to the general public, there was sometimes strong public feeling about the application of local names to the entire feature or a large part of it. Where possible, the extent of physical features should be based on physiographic homogeneity: their limits should coincide with significant topographic breaks. However, where the usage in published material—such as explorers' journals and early geographical reports—transcended the natural limits it was sometimes necessary to extend the area to which the name applied. One principle of nomenclature recognized in Canada was that it was undesirable to give different names to different parts of a river, even when they were separated by lakes. If possible the same name was applied to the entire river, from headwaters to estuary. In such cases, local usage was given greater weight than other factors, although in unsettled areas it was better to retain the names recorded in historical maps or reports than to adopt new ones.

Mr. MOITORET (International Hydrographic Bureau), speaking at the invitation of the President, drew attention to the IHB special publication No. 23, on the *Limits of*

Oceans and Seas. Problems of official delimitation had been recognized since 1919, and the publication represented an attempt to obtain agreement between national hydrographic offices, whose information for mariners was generally prefaced by broad geographical references. The publication was already in its third edition; further editions could be expected as changes were dictated by advances in oceanography.

Mr. LAMBERT (Australia) said that his Government was concerned to note that the Bureau's publication showed the Great Australian Bight as extending from the south-western tip of Australia to the southernmost point of Tasmania. That was contrary to local usage; Australia would prefer to restrict the Great Australian Bight to a more limited area, and to introduce the term "Austral Sea". He asked what authority should be approached on the matter.

Mr. MOITORET (International Hydrographic Bureau), speaking at the invitation of the President, replied that any special publication of the Bureau was subject to modification at the suggestion of any member State. The Australian Government, as a member, could send a communication through its representative to the Bureau suggesting the change, which would then be put to all members. The decision would be based on a simple majority but, since the matter was of concern only to Australia, the change was unlikely to be opposed.

Mr. GALL (Guatemala) said that no specific principles had been adopted in Guatemala for the naming of geographical features, which was generally based on local usage. The authorities in his country were currently faced with the problem of naming certain physical features in the coastal region, and would welcome expert guidance.

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute on Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, contended that publication No. 23 of the International Hydrographic Bureau illustrated a problem not specifically identified in the experts' report. The original purpose of the publication had been to provide the masters of sailing vessels with a means of reporting on the general areas in which they were sailing. At the time it had been impossible for them to do so in terms of the physical composition of water bodies but, as oceanographic data became increasingly available, specialists preferred to differentiate water bodies on the basis of water characteristics. In many cases, those characteristics did not correspond to straight lines drawn between headlands, and the delimitation of water bodies on the basis of water characteristics was likely to conflict with delimitations based on other principles.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (c).

Mr. BREU (Austria) drew a distinction between problems arising from the existence of different spellings of the same name and problems arising from the existence of different names for the same feature. In his country, in such cases, preference was mostly given to the spelling which was etymologically correct. Where a mountain was named in two different ways in the valleys on either side of it, both names were indicated on the map, showing which was used in which valley.

Mr. MAHIAR-NAVABI (Iran) said that the prevailing practice in his country was to retain names recorded in historical documents. Although he recognized that it was important to take into account the unity of physical features and geographical limits, he thought it preferable to retain established geographical names where possible.

² See annex, p. 151.

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FOURTH PLENARY MEETING¹

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 6 September 1967, at 10.20 a.m.

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President:

Mr. BARANOV (*Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*)

Exchange of experience on problems identified in the report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names

[Agenda item 8] (*continued*)

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (e).

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute on Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that the problem was complex and would have to be discussed at some length. He proposed that it should be examined in Committee III.

Mr. GALL (Guatemala) supported the proposal.

The proposal was adopted.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (f).

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute on Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that, in some of the replies transmitted to the Secretariat, countries had stated that the problem did not arise in their case. From such replies it was evident that the problem had not been stated with sufficient clarity, because in reality it was universal. However, it was more likely to arise in the exchange of material between countries than within a given country.

Mr. PEARCY (United States of America) said that, if countries which used languages subject to syntactical and grammatical variations were to decide on one syntactical or grammatical form for each geographical name, all difficulties with regard to international standardization would disappear.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (g).

Mr. MEYNEN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the optional variations in question should be eliminated. In the example given, the official spelling should be "Rothenburg ob der Tauber".

Mr. BREU (Austria) said that, in his country, the names of certain communes included a specifying term to distinguish them from those of other communes. The so-called optional part was not really optional but formed part of the official name and must therefore be printed in full on official maps.

Mr. FRASER (Canada) strongly supported the view expressed by the last two speakers. It was the policy in

Canada to discourage the use of optional elements in the names of populated places.

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute on Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that the problem appeared to have been resolved by countries such as the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria and Canada.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (h).

Mr. MOITORET (International Hydrographic Bureau), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that the problem had been discussed at the ninth International Hydrographic Conference. A proposal had been submitted that national hydrographic offices, when issuing maps of their own coastlines, should not change existing names which appeared in the national language; where such a change was unavoidable, the historical name should appear in brackets on the chart. The proposal had been discussed at considerable length and had finally been rejected, first because it was substantially covered by other resolutions adopted by the International Hydrographic Conference, and secondly in the expectation that a decision might be reached by the current Conference.

It might be of interest to mention some of the points which had been raised during the discussion. The representative of Burma had opposed the proposal on the grounds that, in many cases, the names now appearing on charts were not names recognized by the local inhabitants and it would therefore be desirable to change them. The Chilean representative, on the other hand, had pointed out that, in many cases surveys of coastal areas had been made by nationals of other countries, who had named the features concerned. Cape Horne and Graves Island, for example, were named after explorers. The same representative had also pointed out that, in some cases, geographical names were employed in the scientific denomination of certain species of marine life, so that it would complicate matters for biologists and other scientists if those names were changed. The Yugoslav representative had said that, in many cases, coastal names had been given by foreign Powers, so that there was a natural desire to replace them by national names.

Mr. LOXTON (Kenya) suggested, as one criterion to be applied to the problem, the extent to which a particular name was established. It would obviously give rise to all sorts of difficulties if a well-established name was changed. In his country, the conclusion had been reached that any name appearing in official publications had become established and thereafter became difficult to change. Names which appeared only on medium or large-scale maps (1:50,000 or 1:100,000) and not on other maps could still be corrected. In many cases, the changing of names might cause greater difficulties than retention of the existing names. One solution might be to give correct spellings in brackets.

¹ The original text of this record appeared as document E/CONF. 53/SR.4.

of duplication were purely grammatical, whereas others stemmed from the vernacular usage of the country. He thought that names representing an authentic description of a site or feature should not be altered and suggested that, when the relevant paragraph was modified, it should recommend retaining names which were either internationally accepted or truly descriptive.

The PRESIDENT said that more detailed discussion on the subject would take place in Committees I and IV. He invited comments on problem (i).

Mr. FRASER (Canada) said that one of the principles of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names was, first, that personal names should not be used unless it was in the public interest to honour a person by applying his name to a geographical feature and, secondly, that that should be done during the person's lifetime only in very exceptional circumstances. That was a guiding rather than a mandatory principle; its aim was to discourage the naming of features for political reasons. Each case of such naming would establish a precedent and increase the difficulty of rejecting similar requests in the future. However, in some cases it had been considered a gracious gesture to commemorate the names of worthy pioneer families and, especially in the northern parts of Canada, the practice had been to commemorate the names of servicemen who had died for their country in the Second World War.

Mr. BLOK (Netherlands) fully supported the principle stated by the Canadian representative. In that connexion, he thought that the Conference should discuss only the names of places and of major features, and not minor names such as those of streets and farms, which came under the jurisdiction of local rather than central authorities.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) cited, as an excellent example of the correct use of commemorative names, the USSR practice of naming lunar features after famous people. Even so, that practice might create problems for the makers of international charts, who would have to decide whether a name should be spelt as in the original language or should be directly transliterated from the Russian. Such commemorative use of historical names for newly discovered and nameless regions should be encouraged, but not the use of names of less eminent persons who were still living.

Mr. LOXTON (Kenya) agreed with the Netherlands representative that, in general, street names did not fall into the category of geographical names. However, they might do so in the case of very long highways. The principle applied in Kenya was that, if the road was large enough to appear on the 1:50,000 scale map and had been named by the local council, its name should be treated as a geographical name even though the local authority was solely responsible for the choice.

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute on Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, drew attention to another aspect of the problem: that of personal names which had been assigned to features at some time in the past, for a reason since forgotten. In Alaska, for example, places were named after individuals who had gone there during the gold rush, and it was not known whether they were still living. It might therefore be unwise to impose an outright ban on the use of individuals' names during their lifetime, for much time could be wasted in inquiries.

Mr. LAMBERT (Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that in the Antarctic there was a deliberate policy of honouring explorers, even during their lifetime, by giving their names to geographical features.

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute on Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that the same was done for undersea features. The names of famous people were suitable for such use because they presented no problems of domestic standardization.

Mr. BREU (Austria) said that there were two distinct groups of countries: first, countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States, with vast areas which were either unpopulated or only recently settled, and where commemorative naming was perfectly acceptable; and secondly, smaller, more densely populated countries such as those in western Europe, where commemorative naming was unusual and should be discouraged. In his own country almost no geographical entity had been named after a person, either living or dead, since 1830, when a small village destroyed by flooding had been rebuilt and named after the Emperor Francis I, who had been largely responsible for its reconstruction.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (j).

Mr. BREU (Austria) said that in Austria, which was a federation of *Länder*, duplication in the names of communes within each *Land* was avoided. The names of all communes in a given *Land* had to be registered and, in cases of duplication, explanatory notes had to be added to the names concerned. At the federal level, every effort was made to avoid giving the same name to communes in different *Länder*, but the legal responsibility remained with the *Land* government.

Where two geographical features were found to have the same name and the name was widely known, some wording was added to the name in order to distinguish between the two features: for example, two rivers formerly having the same name on maps were now called "Warme Fische" and "(Kalte) Fische" respectively. No attempt was made to avoid duplication in the case of small hills or mountains known only locally.

Mr. MASSAQUOI (Liberia) said that there was considerable duplication of names in parts of West Africa. In Liberia, names of towns were duplicated in several counties, but that presented no problem provided that the name of the county was mentioned along with that of the town. The same applied to rivers, streams, hills and other geographical features. Alteration of long-standing names would involve, among other difficulties, political problems beyond the competence of the Board of Geographical Names, and would be resented by local inhabitants.

Mr. KHAMASUNDARA (Thailand) said that his country was in a similar position to that of Liberia with regard to duplication of geographical names: Thailand, like Liberia, found that problems of duplication could easily be resolved by mentioning the administrative division, such as the village, town or city, after a duplicate name.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) observed that there were many areas in the world where simple methods of identification of the kind suggested by the two previous speakers would not be possible. In a part of West Africa near Nigeria, for example, there were numerous places with the same name in one district. One remedy would be to avoid using names with meanings, such as "Red Hill", "Mud Lake" or "the House of . . .", since those were the

feasible to distinguish between places which had the same name by means of the numerical system referred to by the Cameroonian representative. To avoid ambiguity, therefore, such places should be located to at least the nearest minute, and the nearest half-minute would be even better.

Mr. ORMELING (Netherlands) said that no Netherlands national had ever discovered where the Sierra Madre Mountains began or ended. In such a case, location to the nearest degree would be sufficient.

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute of Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, endorsed the Netherlands representative's comment. Precision in location would depend on size and other closely related factors. No purpose would be served by attempting to locate geographical features more precisely than the available information permitted. The fineness of reading chosen should be roughly proportionate to the size and numbers of such features.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) said that he still considered that any unit greater than a minute would not supply, in the language of problem (o), "a precision necessary for all needs". The Netherlands representative's point concerning the Sierra Madre Mountains was more relevant to problem (p).

To revert to the Australian representative's inquiry, the choice between grid references and geographical co-ordinates depended on the degree of accuracy required. For example, in dealing with positions on 1:50,000 scale maps or positions related to maps on that scale, it would be less satisfactory for many purposes to have places defined even to one minute than to one-tenth of grid square. The

latter was a far better system of reference in such cases.

Mr. FRASER (Canada) agreed with the United Kingdom representative that geographical entities should as far as possible be located to the nearest minute. That was done in the *Gazetteer of Canada* series, and there was rarely any need for greater precision. For the volume on British Columbia, however, the grid system had been used. That provided reasonable accuracy, but it was not possible to determine the exact position without referring to one of the best maps. Moreover, in the preparation of a gazetteer, the use of the grid system meant including a longer locational description in the text than was necessary when the geographical co-ordinates were used.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) said that, in discussing problem (o), the Conference should bear in mind future requirements. The trend was towards automation of cartography and indexing—including the indexing of names—and towards the use of names indexed by some method of data processing. He therefore considered that places should be recorded nationally to a very high degree of accuracy in order to allow for automatic name-placement in mapping and for other elements of automation which would facilitate and simplify the cartographer's task.

Mr. LOXTON (Kenya) suggested that the discussions in the principal committees might reveal that some reference system other than geographical latitude and longitude would better serve the purpose of location: for example, the universal transverse Mercator projection with its kilometric grid, providing references to the nearest kilometre

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.

generic element. They could not be translated or modified by the addition of such generic elements for purposes of standardization. Norway had a special committee to deal with appeals in regard to geographical names.

Mr. MUTZIGER (United States of America) drew attention to the ambiguity resulting from the use of abbreviations, which was the subject of problem (g) 2.

Mr. BREU (Austria) cited as an instance of such ambiguity the use, in Italy, of the letter "S" as an abbreviation for many forms of the word "San"; that practice created difficulties for people who did not know Italian. It was admittedly necessary to indicate the nature of the geographical entity named, but on maps that could not be done by adding a generic term to the existing name.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) felt sure that the group of experts had not intended that generic terms should be attached to existing geographical names, but only that indexes should give an indication of the nature of the entity to which the name applied, and should include a glossary of the generic toponyms in existing names.

Mr. DAHLBERG (Netherlands) agreed that in some countries it would be impossible to add generic terms to place names. One solution would be to preface the full geographical name with the generic term in very small print.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (r).

Mr. MUTZIGER (United States of America) said that the Group of Experts had intended the problem to be brought to the attention of countries which included the definite article in some of their geographical names, so that the integration of articles in those names could be standardized. The experts had not been sure of the significance of such standardization for domestic use, but considered it important for foreigners to know whether the article was being used.

Mr. SFICLEA (Romania) said that in his country the names of rivers, for instance, could be written in three ways on maps. In the first place, the definite article might precede the hydronym; secondly, the article might be omitted on maps containing many names; and thirdly, the article might be omitted, and the hydronym preceded by the Romanian word for "river". The third variant was most satisfactory for domestic use, while the second was most convenient for foreigners.

Mr. BLOK (Netherlands) observed that the question whether the definite article was essential depended on the language of the country where the place name occurred. In the Netherlands a simple rule had been evolved: the article was regarded as essential if it had to be repeated after an adjective qualifying the place name. Perhaps that rule could apply in some other languages.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) said that that rule would not apply to the English language.

Mr. BURRILL (Pan-American Institute on Geography and History), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that in his opinion the Netherlands rule was purely domestic in its application.

Mr. BURU (Libya) said that in Arabic the definite article was an essential part of a geographical name.

Mr. BREU (Austria) suggested that, to avoid confusion, countries whose languages included the definite article in the name itself should give all the alternative forms of the name in their gazetteers.

Mr. AYOUBI (Lebanon) said that in his country it had been decided to omit the Arabic definite article "El" in the

Roman transcription when the article occurred at the beginning of a geographical name. That solution had the advantages of taking practical usage into account and of simplifying spelling on notices, signs and so forth. Nevertheless, the article was retained if it occurred in the middle of a geographical name.

Mr. CORDERAS DESCÁRREGA (Spain) said that in his country the question was regarded as one for the Spanish Language Academy rather than as a geographical or topographic matter.

Mr. MUTZIGER (United States of America), referring to the Lebanese representative's remarks, said that United States cartographers wished to know the exact names of geographical features in Arabic, for confusion might arise if the article were included at the beginning of a place name on an Arabic map, where the script had not been latinized.

The PRESIDENT invited comments on problem (s).

Mr. BURU (Libya) said that in recent years there had been a trend towards standardizing the Arabic alphabet in English and French. Arabic writers had reached agreement on the transliteration, and *Gazetteer* No. 41 of the United States Board of Geographical Names had been taken as a basis. The Arab States had decided that classical Arabic should be used in writing the alphabet, to the exclusion of dialects. It had not yet been decided, however, whether the English or French transcribed form should be authoritative; Libya used the English spelling, but countries such as Morocco and Algeria used the French.

Mr. MUTZIGER (United States of America) had been interested to note that countries other than his own had had difficulties in documenting name spellings in the Arabic alphabet area. For instance, the problem was referred to in the USSR paper submitted under agenda item 11.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) observed that the term "Arabic script", used in the document just mentioned seemed preferable to "Arabic alphabet".

Mr. VADIIE (Iran) drew attention to a transliteration system for geographical names in Arabic prepared by the head of his delegation in consultation with United States experts and contained in the *Romanization Guide* published by the United States Board on Geographic Names.

Mr. MAHIAR-NAVABI (Iran) said that, although great stress was being laid on ambiguities in documenting Arabic-alphabet names, he did not think Arabic usages were as ambiguous as those of the Roman alphabet. Where Arabic was concerned, the question was simply one of including or not including signs representing short vowels, but the sounds of the Roman alphabet varied widely among the European languages. Those difficulties might perhaps be overcome by using a phonetic system based on the Roman alphabet.

Mr. LEWIS (United Kingdom) agreed with the previous speaker as to the inadequacy of the Roman alphabet, but observed that there was no reliable way of rendering Arabic name spellings into other languages unless short vowels were fully indicated.

Mr. GOMEZ DE SILVA (Mexico) asked whether the consensus among Arabic scholars referred to by the Libyan representative meant that all diacritical marks should be included in standard name spellings.

Mr. BURU (Libya) reiterated that the Arabic-speaking countries had reached agreement on a standardized Arabic alphabet.

A bilateral agreement concluded between his country and the United States in 1957 had made it possible for the National Geographical Service to carry out a project for the standardization of geographical names with the assistance of the United States Army Map Service, and to produce maps on the scale of 1:50,000 which showed place names in both the Khmer and the Roman alphabets. Unfortunately, owing to lack of experience, some errors had been made in the transcriptions into Roman letters. As a normal procedure, the service sent out teams to collect the names of inhabited places, watercourses and other geographical features from the local inhabitants. Those names were subsequently recorded according to the local pronunciation and checked with the land registration authorities of the province in question. Since the inhabitants of the north-eastern province had a marked regional accent, it was difficult for foreign researchers to record place names correctly. It was possible, therefore, that certain errors had occurred in compiling information on those parts of the country which had been covered by researchers from the Philippines.

The service was currently working with the Ministry of the Interior on a compilation of all place names in the kingdom. Those names were generally of historical or

legendary origin, although some might have other characteristics. For example, certain villages in the north-eastern province had Laotian names, which were either translated directly into Khmer or replaced by new names connected with local history or legend. He pointed out, in conclusion, that the real name of his country was "Kampuchea", which was rendered in French as "Cambodge" and in English as "Cambodia"; from a phonetic point of view, the English form was closer to the original than the French.

Mr. SIMPSON (Ghana) said that, before 1967, the various organizations in his country which were responsible for geographical names had worked independently. Only recently had a central committee been formed, under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences, with a view to national standardization. That committee was being assisted in its work by regional sub-committees which dealt with the problems of local dialects. Since there were at least twelve different dialects in Ghana, which covered an area of 92,000 square miles and had a population of 7 million, progress to date had been understandably slow and much remained to be done.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

names of the most important foreign geographical features.

Important progress had recently been made in the standardization of place names through the exclusive use of the orthography established by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

A collection of about 800 names other than administrative ones was being compiled, as reported in the fourth paragraph of his Government's report.

Mr. KABENGELE (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that his country did not yet possess a national organization responsible for standardizing geographical names. It therefore welcomed the opportunity to benefit from the experience of other countries, especially on the subjects covered by items 7 and 8 of the agenda.

With regard to item 9 of the agenda, concerning national standardization, the collection of names in his country was based on information provided by the local administrative authorities; the official spelling reproduced the sound of each name as pronounced by the local inhabitants in accordance with the rules on the spelling of geographical names given in the annex to his Government's report.²

² See below, agenda item 7.

The generic term of geographical features was always given in French, the principal language of the country.

The four main vernacular languages were Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kiswaheli. Geographical names were recorded in the language mainly used by the local inhabitants.

The Congolese Geographical Institute intended to set up field teams to carry out research on geographical names, in collaboration with administrative authorities and local inhabitants, according to the rules already mentioned. On receipt of information from the teams, the Geographical Institute would merely verify that the rules of spelling had been correctly applied to the written word.

A provisional national gazetteer had been produced, based on the 1:200,000 scale maps which were the only ones to cover the whole country. The place names were listed by districts and their positions given to the nearest 15'. However, when the Geographical Institute's new map production programme had been completed, it should be possible to produce a more accurate national gazetteer.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

Luxembourg. The board tried to observe the principles of the spoken language but also sought to avoid changing name-forms already adopted in other countries. Place-name spellings were based on forms appearing in historical documents in French, while the names of topographical features were transcribed into a form corresponding as closely as possible to local pronunciation. The phonetic writing system used, although ideal for linguistic purposes, was ill-suited to cartographic needs.

Mr. RATAJSKI (Poland) said that a great deal of work had been done since the war on the restoration of former Polish geographical names, especially in the western and northern parts of the country. The results of that work were contained in a two-volume publication recently issued by a special commission of leading linguists and geographers established for that purpose. The geographical names proposed had subsequently been officially approved for general use. A detailed study by Professor Kondracki on the division of the country into physical geographical regions included a list of proposed regional names; most had been adopted, although some were still under discussion. Another recent work, by Professor Zwolinski, dealt with the hydronymy of the Vistula basin, which covered three-quarters of the country. Most of the work on geographical names was done by field teams under the auspices of the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography. Large-scale maps had been prepared for the entire country, and the names of nearly all places had been approved in an official form. General geographical gazetteers were drawn up by a special administrative department.

The Commission on Geographical Names, established in the Geographical Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1952, had worked out some general principles for the transcription of foreign geographical names. The gazetteer published by the commission contained nearly 20,000 names giving Polish spellings alongside officially recognized forms, an indication of the system used for

transcribing geographical names from languages with non-Roman writing systems, and a glossary of common geographical terms. Work was in progress on a world atlas.

Mr. ROUBIK (Czechoslovakia) said that cartographers and geographers had been working on the standardization of geographical names in his country for some decades and that a gazetteer had recently been issued giving the geographically and philologically correct forms of all names of inhabited localities in Czechoslovakia. Any name changes were decided by the competent authorities jointly with a special commission of cartographical, geographical and philological experts. A Terminology Commission established under the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography and composed of representatives of government departments and academic institutions, together with specialists in history, geography and philology, dealt with any problems arising in connexion with geographical names in Czechoslovakia and with the transcription of foreign geographical names. Each administrative area had its own terminology commission. The work of the area commissions was supervised by the central Terminology Commission, which had issued an instruction manual on the subject. The commission's gazetteers, when approved by the Directorate of Geodesy and Cartography, were used for the preparation of maps in the Czech and Slovak languages.

The PRESIDENT said that since all problems could not be covered during the Conference, attention should now be focused on those points upon which agreement could be reached. If the Conference made recommendations which could not be implemented, co-operation would not be advanced. The Conference might agree not to adopt any resolution which would have the effect of trying to make any country do what it was unable or unprepared to do.

It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINTH PLENARY MEETING¹

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 22 September 1967, at 9.50 a.m.

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President:

Mr. BURRILL (*United States of America*)

Report of the Conference [Agenda item 13] (*concluded*)

The PRESIDENT invited the Conference to examine the draft report of Committee III.

The draft report of Committee III was adopted with drafting amendments.

The PRESIDENT invited the Conference to examine chapter II of its draft report.

The first part of chapter II was adopted.

Resolution 19 and recommendations A, B, C and D were adopted.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that recommendation E consisted of a series of amendments to the language of recommendation VII of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names.²

In reply to a question by Mr. ORMELING (Netherlands), Mr. GOMEZ DE SILVA (Mexico), Rapporteur, stated that, although the Conference had not adopted any resolution endorsing the recommendations of the Group of Experts, recommendation VII of the group had been approved, with certain amendments, in Committee II and was now before the Conference.

Mr. SIMPSON (Ghana) said that, in his view, the Conference was not competent to amend a recommendation adopted by the Group of Experts. The Conference should simply state its views concerning recommendation VII, without attempting to analyse it in detail. It was clearly the view of the Conference that the fourth paragraph of the recommendation was inappropriate. The Conference should include in its own recommendation only those parts of recommendation VII which it considered satisfactory.

Mr. BARANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) recalled that his delegation had been represented on the working group of Committee II which had dealt with the paragraph in question. The working group had considered that paragraph most carefully and had recommended that it should be deleted because its adoption would result in the addition of a number of new diacritical marks and letters to inscriptions on existing maps.

He felt that the Conference could safely agree to the deletion of that paragraph.

Mr. GEELAN (United Kingdom) endorsed the Soviet representative's comments. There were three possibilities open to the Conference. First, it might leave recommendation VII as it stood, but that would imply that the recommendation had not been discussed. Secondly, it might delete the fourth paragraph and adopt a revised version of recommendation VII; that would be a rather drastic solution. Thirdly, it might accept a minor revision of the recommendation and refer the whole question to the proposed United Nations permanent Commission of experts on geographical names. In his opinion, the last was the most practical course of action.

The PRESIDENT suggested the following procedure: the Conference would state in its report that, after considering recommendation VII of the Group of Experts, it had taken the view that that recommendation might be better worded. It would then approve an amended recommendation in the form of a resolution, which would become resolution 20, concluding with the words: "Recommends that the proposed United Nations permanent commission of experts on geographical names should consider this question further".

It was so agreed.

The remainder of chapter II, as a whole, as amended, was adopted.

The PRESIDENT invited the Conference to examine the draft report of Committee II.

The draft report was adopted with drafting amendments.

Mr. BARANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that, according to a letter from four delegations circulated as a Conference document (E/CONF.53/L.85), the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany was authorized to speak for the whole of Germany. The fact was that Germany was currently composed of two sovereign States, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. His delegation had drafted a document on the subject (E/CONF.53/L.87) and requested that it should be circulated as a Conference document.

The PRESIDENT said that, if there was no objection, the Soviet request would be granted.

It was so agreed.

Mr. GALL (Guatemala), supported by Mr. KABENGELE (Democratic Republic of the Congo) suggested that the Conference should adopt a resolution addressing a vote of thanks to the United Nations Secretariat.

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Conference should adopt such a resolution in principle, leaving the text to be drafted by the Rapporteur.

It was so agreed.

¹ The original text of the record appeared as document E/CONF.53/SR.9.

² See annex, p. 151.

Part II
TECHNICAL PAPERS

AGENDA ITEM 7

Reports by Governments on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names

PAPER PRESENTED BY KENYA¹

Many of the problems detailed in section II of the report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names² have been encountered in Kenya and are now discussed in a separate paper submitted under agenda item 8. The following summary indicates the progress made in Kenya along the lines of the recommendations set out in section III of the report.

Recommendation I

The Survey Act 1961 (Cap. 299 of the 1962 Laws of Kenya) repeats the provisions of earlier Acts that there shall be a Standing Committee on Geographical Names (SCGN) which shall advise the Minister for Lands on the spelling of all names on maps of Kenya, having due regard to historical, orthographical and ethnic considerations.

It will be seen that the SCGN has only advisory powers and no executive authority. It can recommend spellings to be published on maps but not their adoption in other spheres of activity.

The SCGN held regular meetings from 1948 to 1952, during which time many decisions on policy and principles were made; these have been a valuable guide for the Survey of Kenya (as caretaker for the SCGN) ever since.

The Chairman of the SCGN is (ex-officio) the Director of Surveys. The original members of the SCGN were each expert in one or more local languages and also had extensive geographical knowledge of the country. Such qualifications were found mainly among missionaries and retired administrators. However, it was not possible for a dozen members of a central committee to cover adequately such a vast field of research (an area of 225,000 square miles, or 580,000 km² with over thirty main languages and up to 30,000 principal geographical names). The committee examined about 2,000 individual names and the majority of its decisions on spelling have been confirmed, but a large number were based on inadequate local knowledge and have had to be revised after further research.

The supporting secretariat and records work for the SCGN has been provided by the Survey of Kenya. Although the committee has not met for many years, the task of collecting names, processing them through to the printed maps and maintaining records has been carried on by the secretary to the SCGN and by other Survey staff.

The basic unit of collection is one sheet of the 1:50,000 scale national map (1:100,000 where there is no 1:50,000). When a map sheet is being field-checked prior to first publication or revision, the surveyor collects names of all features by local inquiry. The names are listed systematically on a form; the surveyor fills in the first three

columns, which give the map reference, the feature name, and the draft name. Where more than one administrative unit (usually a district) falls in one map sheet, each district is dealt with separately.

The surveyor takes the form to the most suitable local authorities; these may be administrators, missionaries, school-teachers etc. (a specially chosen local committee would be the ideal). The consultant completes the following columns on the forms: recommended spelling; alternative name (if any); vernacular spelling; language; meaning. A final column is provided for the International Phonetic System spelling; but as the committee's only member conversant with that spelling has left Kenya, this column is usually unfilled.

After the forms are returned to the Survey office, the SCGN should approve or alter the recommended spellings and send them to the Minister for publication. These stages are at present in abeyance. The spellings are checked by the secretary (who may refer them to another consultant) and are passed for publication on maps.

Finally approved names are card-indexed. However, out of 30,000 names collected, only 2,000 have reached this stage.

Copies of maps and names lists were supplied to the United States Board on Geographical Names, which in 1964 published a Kenya gazetteer containing 26,400 names. Since that date, more names have been collected and revised spellings for others have been adopted; a new edition of the gazetteer will become necessary.

Recommendation II

Some of the main principles laid down by the SCGN which have been continuously applied to the treatment of names on Kenya maps are stated below.

(a) Names should be spelt in Swahili orthography. (It should be explained that, in East Africa, English is the language of higher education, foreign trade and most commercial and government business; but Swahili is the recognized *lingua franca* and is spoken either in pure or simplified form by many more people than is English. It uses a Latin type alphabet omitting the letters "Q" and "X" while "C" occurs only in the digraph "CH". Consonants are pronounced as in English and vowels as in Italian.) This rule is not yet applied to names of foreign origin spelt in English orthography, which are retained in their original spelling even if this contains a "Q", "X" or "C".

(b) In addition to Swahili and English, several other orthographies are in use in various parts of Kenya (e.g. Kikuyu and Maasai). Where the spelling in a local orthography of a geographical name has become established by usage, it may be adopted on maps, subject to principle (a) above (e.g. Kikuyu "C" must be rendered as Swahili "CH", Maasai "N" as Swahili "NG" etc.). The

¹ The original text of this paper, prepared by J. Loxton, Secretary, Standing Committee on Geographical Names, appeared as document E/CONF.53/L.3.

² See annex, p. 151.

etc., have for the most part not been subject to official decision. Such names have, however, appeared on official maps, hydrological maps and sea charts.

The names of geographical entities appearing on the official topographic maps may be determined, changed or dropped by the various *Land* survey offices for their respective areas.

Thus far, such changes have not been published in the official memoranda. However, the Institut für Landeskunde has a standing documentation service for geographical names, set up as the Kartei der Landschaftsnamen (general catalogue of geographical names) and will publish an official gazetteer of geographical names. A map "*Relief und Landschaftsnamen*" (1:1,000,000), with the recommended geographical names, has been published by the office to promote the authorized spelling approved by the SAGN on a broad basis.

Names of protected natural areas and natural parks are determined by official decision; there are also proposals for determining the names of important highways.

The names of larger rivers and streams appear in the serial volumes of the *Deutsches Gewässerkundliches Jahrbuch*, the official gauging records and hydrological maps which are published by the various local water boards. In the case of artificial waterways (canals, dammed lakes), the official names are published by the responsible authority for the *Land* (Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Agriculture). The spelling of geographical names in the Deutsche Bucht (German coastal area on the North Sea) is co-ordinated for German sea charts and topographic maps at 1:25,000 by the SAGN working together with the German Hydrographic Institute, the various river and shipping authorities, and the *Land* survey offices of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. The authorized spellings are published in special lists.

2. Names of communes and inhabited places

The official spelling of such names in each of the *Länder* is determined by the designated authority.

Since 1871, official gazetteers have been published by the State statistical offices and have indicated the authorized spelling of names of communes and inhabited places. Since 1925, general directories covering the then German Reich and the present Federal Republic of Germany, have been published by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Since 1952, the various State statistical offices have notified the Regional Geographic Office at Bad Godesberg of

changes in names of communes and inhabited places. The information is recorded and passed on to the various national agencies, such as the Federal Statistical Office and the Institute for Applied Geodesy. The establishment of a central clearing house has the advantage of registration and co-ordination at a national level. Most place names in Germany are the product of a long historical development. This explains the differences in spelling: the retention of older forms, such as "Frankenthal" with a "th", together with the new use of "t" as in "Wuppertal"; "Cochem" with a "C", together with the newer "K" as in Kassel; the parts of compound names written either together or separately (e.g. "Klein Gusborn", "Kleinsachsenheim" and "Klein-Auheim") and different official forms of additional geographic suffixes (e.g. "Bernstein a. Wald", "Giengen an der Brenz"). A complete standardization of all forms (prefixes and additional geographic suffixes) and spellings would be difficult to achieve and extremely costly.

Gemeindenamen (names of communes)

Changes in and additions to communal names are usually proposed by the communes themselves. In other cases, where a change is proposed by the state government, consultation with the local communal board is necessary. In Bavaria, consultation with the township population is mandatory.

Wohnplatznamen (names of inhabited places)

In some *Länder*, changes in names of inhabited places are decided by the local communal board and are then regarded as official. In other *Länder*, changes must be approved by the office of the district government; in Bavaria, the local population must endorse them.

Flurnamen (names of lands and fields)

Such names have in most cases not been determined by any official agency, their entry in official cadastral plans and gazetteers being based upon a study of the most widely used forms in older records and maps. For the *Land* Baden-Württemberg, a general work, *Flurnamenbuch, Flurnamenschreibung in amtlichen Karten* has been published (third edition 1958). This deals with the meaning of *Flurnamen*, gives the spelling according to authorized spelling rules and lists the most important *Flurnamen*. In other *Länder*, *Flurnamen* are approved by the local survey offices before being included in topographic maps.

PAPER PRESENTED BY AUSTRIA*

The Austrian authorities concerned with cartographic and statistical matters have striven for a long time to achieve the standardization of geographical names and have achieved the results set out below.

I

As the present Conference is interested in the problem of standardization of geographical names at a national level mainly from the standpoint of the usefulness of the results for international cartographic work, this report will be based on the publication which is the only one to represent all classes of geographical names, namely, the map of Austria at 1:50,000 published and frequently revised by

* The original text of this paper appeared as document E/CONF. 53/L.12.

the Survey Department of the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying.

II

Conformity does not exist in all instances between the writing of geographical names on the map of Austria at 1:50,000 on the one hand and that on the map series of the Survey Department on the other.

The map of Austria at 1:25,000 has been published only for a part of Austria and is not kept up to date. Work on the map of Austria at 1:200,000 has just begun. This map will be—as regards geographical names—in full accord with the map of Austria at 1:50,000. The general map of central Europe at 1:200,000, which will be replaced for Austrian territory by the map of Austria at 1:200,000,