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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 11 September 1967, at 10.30 a.m.

<u>President:</u>	Mr. BURRILL	United States of America
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. GOMEZ de SILVA	Mexico
<u>Executive Secretary:</u>	Mr. URETA	
<u>Deputy Executive Secretary:</u>	Mr. CHRISTOPHER	

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ADDRESS BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Mr. ARCE (Representative of the Secretary-General) said that the work of the Conference was of vital importance for the future; it should be judged in the context of present-day technological development. The present age was an outstanding one in world history because of the remarkable technological progress made in the past fifty years; it could be described as a technological Renaissance. Technical advances were increasing the interdependence of nations; the world was becoming smaller in the jet age; natural resources were no longer the heritage of individual countries, but belonged to the whole world.

Cartography, too, had improved its technical methods. The plane table and the theodolite had given way to aerial photography and the use of lasers in topographical surveying. It was astonishing that, in a period of such enormous technical progress all over the world, geographical names had remained in a state of utter confusion. The Conference had been convened to remedy the situation. The importance that Governments attached to it was evident from the quality of the participants.

The outcome of the Conference would be a landmark in the progress of universal geography and an important step forward in standardizing the maps produced in different parts of the world. It would also be of invaluable assistance in statistical and census work.

The United Nations hoped that, as one of the results of the Conference, countries which had not yet appointed special authorities to be responsible for fixing geographical names would do so as soon as possible. The Conference would suggest guidelines for the work of national authorities and would indicate the rules to be followed in standardizing geographical names.

The work of Committee No. 4, on international co-operation, was particularly important as a contribution to the constant efforts of the United Nations to promote such co-operation. The Cartography Section would act as a centre for the interchange of geographical names and for the supply of information on the rules established for their standardization.

On behalf of the Secretary-General, he thanked the Group of Experts on Geographical Names for its valuable preparatory work and wished the Conference every success.

The PRESIDENT said that the Secretary-General's representative had given a useful reminder that the Conference was meeting, not as a gathering of people from different countries, but as an international group seeking ways of co-operating

internationally; the representative had drawn attention to the wider implications of international co-operation on the standardization of geographical names.

The Secretary-General's representative had also stressed the significance of the Conference's work in the context of the present remarkable advance in technological development. The technological "explosion" would have an increasing bearing on the practical measures discussed, adopted, tried out and modified. New tools were available; names would have to be handled in unprecedented numbers; and new methods would have to be devised to cope with them. One of the difficulties was that changes occurred so rapidly that past experience was no longer an adequate preparation for dealing with future problems. However, countries where there had not been much teaching on the standardization of geographical names might usefully bear in mind the value of teaching as a means of learning. Those who had had experience in teaching were well aware how much they learned in the process of preparing material for their students.

He welcomed the presence of the Secretary-General's representative, whose position in the United Nations and long-standing interest in the subject of the Conference would enable him to view its work in the right perspective. That would be extremely helpful, since experts often tended to overlook the wider implications of their particular problems.

REPORTS OF GOVERNMENTS ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES (agenda item 7) (E/CONF.53/L.3, L.6, L.9, L.12, L.13, L.17, L.21, L.22, L.23, L.25, L.35, L.40, L.42, L.44, L.45, L.46, L.65) (continued)

Mr. FÖLDI (Hungary) said that in his country, as stated in the Government's report (E/CONF.53/L.13), the official forms of administrative names were given in a gazetteer published regularly by the Central Statistical Office; the official forms of names other than administrative names were established by the Committee on Geographical Names of the National Office of Lands and Mapping. The Committee dealt with geographical names in Hungary, and the progress made was described in the last paragraph of the report. It also dealt with the Hungarian forms of foreign geographical names. A list of the names of foreign countries in the forms to be used in Hungarian would be published, shortly, and the Committee intended to publish later on a similar list of the 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.

With regard to names other than administrative names, a collection of about 800 such names 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 (E/CONF.53/L.42). 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 Kiswahili. 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 minutes. 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.