

UNITED NATIONS

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Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

Working Paper  
No. 60

Twentieth Session  
New York, 17 – 28 January 2000

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Item 6  
of the Provisional Agenda

REPORTS OF LIAISON OFFICERS, REGIONAL MEETINGS AND  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Report on the  
UNGEGN Liaison with the  
Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR)

## Report on the UNGEGN Liaison with the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR)

Resolution 12 of the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names recommends that UNGEGN:

- (a) Recognize the working procedures on Antarctic place-names being established by the SCAR Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information;
- (b) Establish liaison with SCAR for the purpose of promoting communication between the two bodies and providing UNGEGN periodically with a written report on relevant activities of SCAR.

At present there are more than 40 signatory countries to the Antarctic Treaty, and place-names appear in 15 or more languages and five scripts. Gazetteers or lists of geographical names and guidelines for naming features in the Antarctic have been issued by some 15 countries in various grades of completeness. However, internationally agreed guidelines for proposing new names and for using existing place-names have not as yet been set up. In many cases unintentional multiple naming of features, and either translation or mistranslation of place-names have caused ambiguity and confusion in their current usage in the Antarctic.

SCAR is the scientific advisory body to the Antarctic Treaty System. At present more than 20 SCAR member countries are actively conducting mapping programmes in the Antarctic and as such are being involved in problems of geographical naming in a practical way. These countries are collaborating in the SCAR Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information (WG-GGI).

At the XXII SCAR Meeting held in Argentina in 1992, a work programme "Antarctic place-names" was set up by the WG-GGI and approved by SCAR. The work programme is co-convened by Germany and Italy and covers the following main items:

- (1) Facilitate the correct and unambiguous identification of geographic features in the Antarctic;
- (2) Develop guidelines to be internationally used for the naming of features and for the use of already existing place-names in the Antarctic;
- (3) Consider all land features, ice shelves, subglacial features, and inshore features of the continental shelf south of 60°S;
- (4) Deal with the writing of place-names in the Roman script including diacritical marks, but not the pronunciation;
- (5) Adhere to the resolutions and recommendations prepared by UNGEGN and adopted by the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names;
- (6) Collect all available Antarctic gazetteers and lists of geographical names preferably in digital form, issued or published by different countries.

### Toponymic guidelines for the Antarctic

The work on preparing toponymic guidelines for the Antarctic was allocated to Germany. A draft paper, titled '*Proposed International Toponymic Guidelines for the Antarctic*', was prepared and tabled at the formal meeting of the SCAR Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information (WG-GGI) held at the

XXIII SCAR Meeting in Rome in 1994. After discussing the paper, the WG-GGI submitted this document with minor amendments (Version: Rome, 31 August 1994) to the SCAR Executive. The following recommendation was approved and National Committees would be asked to comment:

**Recommendation XXIII GGI-1** (Rome, 1994)

Recognizing the importance of unambiguous naming of geographic features, for both scientific and operational purposes;

Noting that many Antarctic features now have multiple names, and that there are no international procedures in place to limit future multiple naming, or to guide in the selection of which name should be used on a map or in a scientific or logistic publication;

*The SCAR Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information:*

Recommends that SCAR considers

- *the content of its Proposed International Toponymic Guidelines for the Antarctic; and*
- *the process for their review, adoption and implementation.*

The matter was further discussed at XXIV SCAR in Cambridge in 1996. The following recommendation was adopted by the SCAR Executive:

**Recommendation SCAR XXIV-5** (Cambridge, 1996)

*Concerning Place Names*

Noting that the SCAR Composite Gazetteer currently contains names data from sixteen SCAR member countries, comprising around 37,000 entries for 16,000 features (including over 1000 features with two or more entirely different names);

Noting further that the International Hydrographic Organisation has developed procedures for the naming of undersea features;

Considering that, in the interests of both scientific clarity and operational safety, the general principle of 'one name per feature' should apply on the Antarctic continent as in other parts of the world;

SCAR recommends that National Committees, via their governments, request the Antarctic Treaty to adopt principles for Antarctic place naming, including consideration of the following:

1. *New names shall not be applied to features that have already been named by a national or international naming authority – in adopting existing names, countries are encouraged not to vary any part of such names.*
2. *All new names approved and documented by naming authorities should be regularly supplied to SCAR for publication in the SCAR composite Gazetteer.*
3. *When selecting existing names for use on maps and in other publications, countries are encouraged to give preference to the earliest approved or documented name – without varying any part of such names.*
4. *That the Antarctic Treaty formally request SCAR to develop comprehensive 'Antarctic Toponymic Guidelines', in close cooperation with national and international naming authorities, based on the adopted principles.*

Further actions regarding the approval of toponymic guidelines for the Antarctic were not identified.

### Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica

The compilation of a Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica (CGA) was allocated to Italy. Work began by collating existing gazetteers or lists of geographical names issued by countries adhering to SCAR as Full Members or Associate Members. A first draft of the Composite Gazetteer was presented and discussed at the WG-GGI meeting, held at XXIII SCAR in Rome in 1994. WG-GGI members were requested to revise and to authorize the integrated data of their countries. At the WG meeting held in Cambridge in 1996, an improved version of the first draft was tabled and discussed. The importance and necessity for continuation of this work was underlined by Recommendation SCAR XXIV-5 as cited above. Furthermore, the Working Group requested Italy to publish the Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica on the occasion of XXV SCAR in 1998.

The printed version of the CGA was presented at the meeting of the WG-GGI held in Concepción in 1998. The gazetteer consists of two volumes. Volume I contains some 21 500 alphabetically ordered different geographical names, which correspond to about 33 000 names found in all national gazetteers. To each name a reference number is assigned. The reference number is equivalent to one of the approximately 16 500 named Antarctic features as listed in Volume II. For each feature, all existing variant names, as approved by the countries, are represented synoptically, without indicating a preference for any name. National gazetteers or geographical names lists have been considered for Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, and the gazetteer of IHO / IOC.

The SCAR general policy regarding geographical names was stated anew as

**Recommendation SCAR XXV-7** (Concepción, 1998)

*Concerning Antarctic Place-names*

Noting that the SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica (CGA):

- has been published in March 1998 by the SCAR Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information (WG-GGI)
- contains names data from twenty SCAR member countries and the International Hydrographic Organisation / International Oceanographic Commission;
- comprises around 33,000 entries for 16,500 features, including around 500 features with two or more entirely different names;

Considering that, in the interests of both scientific clarity and operational safety, the general principle of 'one name per feature' should apply for all new feature names;

SCAR recommends that National Committees, directly or through their national Antarctic naming authority:

1. refer to the CGA in considering all proposals for new place names;
2. avoid adding new place names to features already named;
3. submit all new approved place names to the WG-GGI for inclusion in the CGA.

The Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica is available in a query made on the internet ([www.pnra.it/SCAR\\_GAZE](http://www.pnra.it/SCAR_GAZE)), accompanied by extensive information and descriptions.