

Ad Hoc Group of Experts on
the Standardization of
Geographical Names
New York, 10-20 March 1970

MINUTES NO. 1

Meeting held on Tuesday, 10 March 1970

The Rules of Procedure of the Geneva Conference were adopted with the following modifications:

- Rule 1. Each expert shall participate as an expert rather than as a representative of a state.
- Rules 2-4. Credentials are not required since the experts were invited rather than appointed.
- Rule 6. The officers elected at the Geneva Conference shall function until the next conference. Messrs. Loxton, Geelan and Page were appointed by the Chairman as assistants to the rapporteur.
- Rule 24. Decisions shall be made either by consensus or by a majority of regions rather than by a majority of states.
- Rule 26. Roll-call votes, if required, will be taken in order of the list of regions in Vol. 1 of the Geneva Conference report, beginning with the region whose name is drawn by lot by the President.

The question of the adoption of the agenda was presented. Dr. Ormeling proposed that Item 4b be treated cursorily, and that Item 5 should be deleted altogether. Following statements in support of 4b by the Executive Secretary, by Mr. Delaney, and by the chairman, and statements in support of Item 5 by Mr. Komkov, these two Items were retained unchanged. At the suggestion of Col. Sharma, supported by Mr. Lewis, a new Item 7 - "Other Business" - was added, and existing Item 7 was renumbered Item 8.

The Chairman reported that the May 18, 1968 ECOSOC meeting, at which there were considered the Geneva Conference recommendations for a permanent committee and a second conference, unfortunately was a time of fiscal emergency at the U.N. However, the high percent of UN Member States represented at Geneva, the high percent of attendees who were technical people, and the obvious success of the conference were strong arguments for continuation of the programme. Although it was not possible to establish a new body nor to make any other financial commitments, ECOSOC invited the Group of Experts already in being to carry out functions proposed for the permanent committee and requested the Secretary-General to consult with the Group on the holding of a second conference.

The Chairman reported on the Geneva conference at two other international meetings. Prior to the International Geographical Congress in New Delhi in December 1968, an abstract of his proposed paper was circulated to those who would probably be member of the Group of Experts for comment, and received general concurrence. The full paper is being distributed along with a paper read at the first Central American Regional Reunion on Standardization of Geographical Names held in Guatemala.

En route to and from New Delhi, the Chairman made calls in Athens, Ankara, Beirut, Nicosia, Jerusalem, Manila, Taipei, and Tokyo. It became apparent that communications from the United Nations were not always getting through to the people interested in names, and that additional channels are necessary. It also was evident that people were sincerely trying to implement the recommendations of the Geneva Conference.

Attending the International Congress of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) in Vienna in 1969, not as Chairman of the Group of Experts, but as U.S. member of the International Committee on the Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), he had unsuccessfully urged ICOS to enhance its role as a scientific fact-finding body and refrain from blanket endorsement of ISO romanization systems as proposed by Dr. Breu. At the sectional paper reading meeting at which the resolution was brought up anyone attending could vote, and the attendance was very largely Austrian and German. Discussion of the matter was brief and was generally not translated from German. At the meeting of the Statutory Committee, although translation was promised, it was not provided. The question was put in German, and voted in the order of "no", "abstention", and "yes", a procedure which was not understood by non-German speakers. Repeated efforts to obtain a copy of the resolution were unavailing until last week, so it could not be distributed.

Dr. Breu graciously showed the visiting American delegation some of the results of work in Austria since Geneva 1967, and provided copies of a specialized glossary that has been distributed both before and at this meeting.

The Chairman then asked Mr. Breu to confirm the accuracy of his account of the proceedings of the ICOS meeting. Mr. Breu replied that he was not a member of the Statutory Committee which approved the resolution for ratification by the Congress, but that other nations were represented at the Section meeting at which the resolution had been adopted, including delegates from Eastern and Southern European countries. Mr. Howda stated that his recollection agreed with that of the Chairman.

The Chairman further reported that at the First Centroamerican Regional Reunion on Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Guatemala City in October 1968, Guatemala put at the disposal of its neighbors its experience and expertise in a national programme of name standardization, including a field demonstration. All Centroamerican countries attended and all but Nicaragua sent technical people. Great interest was stimulated and several countries are expected to register new programmes.

The BGN and PCGN held the seventh in its series of biennial consultations in 1968, at which a joint statement on romanization was worked out. It will be distributed as a working paper.

The German-Dutch Region held a meeting last January and has brought a written report to this meeting.

Dr. Ormeling asked if the Chairman could point to any positive results from his "public relations activities". He further asked whether the IGU and other international organizations had been approached by the Chairman for approval of the recommendations set down at Geneva in 1967.

Mr. Gall stated that the "missionary activities" of the Chairman had been instrumental in the creation of a permanent place names committee in Guatemala, and had done much to stimulate interest in geographic names elsewhere in Latin America as well.

Mr. Komkov also spoke favorably concerning the Chairman's activities.

Oral reports on national activities were presented by Messrs. Gomez de Silva, Breu, Delaney, Gall, Ormeling, Loxton, Howda, Komkov, Meynen, Tsao and Burrill.