SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
London, 10-31 May 1972
Item 11(a) (b) of the provisional agenda

WRITING SYSTEMS

Presented by the Governments of Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland

(a) Transfer of names from one writing system into another

1. Wherever a given romanization system has been officially introduced and is employed in practice by a country for a language that is spoken on its territory and uses a non-Roman alphabet, that same romanization system, irrespective of its scientific qualities, should be recommended for international use.

2. If preparatory work, aiming at devising a romanization system as under paragraph 1 is being carried on in a country, no resolution on that matter should be passed until such preparatory work has yielded palpable results.

3. If, and while, in the case of languages using non-Roman alphabets no official romanization system as under paragraph 1 exists and no preparatory work as under paragraph 2 is observable, it is recommended that a system of romanization that has proved workable in international use, especially in linguistics, libraries and documentation be adopted. If more than one such romanization system exists for a language, preference should be given to a system which enables reconversion to be performed with a maximum of exactitude and simplicity.

4. Among the possible instances of conversion from one writing system into another, only conversion from non-Roman alphabets and from no-alphabet scripts into Roman script falls within the scope of international standardization of geographical names.

(b) Writing of names from unwritten languages

, 5. For practical reasons the question of writing names from unwritten languages should be dealt with under item 9 of the agenda (national standardization),

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since the written fixation of names from unwritten languages is a task for
national administration and is of no immediate interest for international
standardization until such names have passed from the unwritten language into the
official language of the country. International standardization is not to be
expected to face the problem of taking over any names directly from unwritten
languages, it being safe to presume that no unwritten language has the status
of an official national language.