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REPORTS BY MEMBERS OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THEIR REGIONS

Progress made in Tropical Africa

Paper submitted by the Experts representing Region 14

region = division
regional = " al

Reports by Members of the Group of Experts
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Progress in Tropical Africa
(submitted by the Expert representing Region 14)

Committee IV at the Geneva Conference divided the world into 14 geographic/linguistic ^{divisions} regions (see E/CONF.61/L.57); Region 14 was termed 'Africa South of the Sahara'. This is sometimes shortened to Sub-Saharan Africa.

It is now suggested that this ^{division} region be termed Tropical Africa. In the north the Tropic of Cancer crosses the Sahara and divides us from the Arabic region; in the south the Tropic of Capricorn approximately divides us from South Africa. The reason for this suggestion is that many of the factors common to the States of Tropical Africa are not shared by South Africa.

This report covers Tropical Africa which comprises 35 Member States of the United Nations. It is notable that only 8 have responded to the invitation to attend this Conference and, on the second day of the Conference, when this report is being delivered, only three (Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya) have arrived and are seated.

Among the factors common to the States of Tropical Africa are that they are all members, of O.A.U. (Organisation of African Unity) and within the operational area of U.N.E.C.A; are all developing countries and according to statistics published by United Nations, they form the largest single block of States with a low G.N.P. (gross national product).

This, in practical terms, means that they all have pressing problems in the provision of basic needs in such fields as health, education, food production, creation of communications and industry, etc. It follows that they find it difficult to spare either funds or suitably skilled manpower for low-priority projects among which, regrettably, must be included toponymy.

Hundreds of different languages are spoken in the region. Fortunately, for our work, they fall into recognisable groups eg south of the Equator most of them belong to the Bantu group, in which Swahili (or Kiswahili) is the most widely used as a lingua franca. Furthermore they nearly all use English or French for the daily business of Government.

It has been suggested that the Region is too large and should be divided; there is, however, no obvious way of doing this. Such division as exists tends to be between anglophone States and francophone States; this is neither an ethnic nor a geographic grouping, and must in time disappear.

The convening of a Regional Conference has also been considered. However, it seems unlikely, at present time that many Member States would attend. A circular questionnaire was sent out by the Secretariat on behalf of the Regional Expert and evoked only 13 replies. From these it appeared that few of the Member States have active toponymic organisations. The States represented at this Conference are, of course, among those few which do actively engage in toponymic processing.

It appears that Anglophone States tend to set up their own organisations whereas work in francophone States is carried on with the aid of the I.G.N. in France (see Report by the French Government E/CONF.61/L.64).

The field for toponymic work in Tropical Africa is still immense and if significant progress is to be made, external aid, particularly in the provision of finance, and possibly also in processing, will be needed.

The Group of Experts has made tentative approaches to some possible sources of aid but thus far without success. The search will continue.