GLOSSARY OF THE TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES*

Report presented by France

In September 1967, the French Government submitted to the Geneva Conference a draft amendment to the list of technical terms which was annexed to the report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names (New York, 20 June to 1 July 1960).

* The original text of this paper, submitted in French, was contained in E:CONF.61/L.67. The glossary itself was issued as document E:CONF.61/L.67/Add.1. Copies are available for reference at the Map Collection of the United Nations. It was decided not to reproduce this glossary at this stage, pending its completion and acceptance by the United Nations Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

STANDARDIZATION OF THE TERMINOLOGY OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES: TERMS AND DEFINITIONS*

Paper presented by Norway

Place-name investigators, as well as cartographers and geographers, use a number of terms to describe various categories of place names. The meaning which they attach to these terms may at times appear rather vague and ill-defined, and this frequently leads to misunderstandings. Even in the Nordic countries the use of terms varies from one country to another.

Place names are proper names, just as personal names are. The category of “proper name designating a locality” is in Norwegian called stednavn or stedsnavn (place name), in Danish stednavn, in Swedish ornarnamn, in Icelandic örnefini and in Faroese staðnavn. In Nordic the term is briefly defined as “the designation for a place having the quality of a proper name, the name of a geographical locality”.

In 1813 the Dane Rasmus Rask suggested the term "stednavn" as a translation of nomina locorum. Versions with and without -s- (stednavn, stednavn) were both used, without distinction, from 1819 up to the end of the nineteenth century. Since then, the form "stednavn" without -s- has been the only version of the term in Danish. The form of Norwegian known as bokmål (or riksmål) has the version with an -s-, "stedsnavn", borrowed from the older Danish form. The Swedish word “ortnamn” is first recorded as used in 1884. Corresponding terms in other Germanic languages are also nineteenth-century innovations. The German word "Ortsname", for example, was used for the first time in the writings of Goethe about 1800. English used "names of places" or "local names" until the term “place name” was created on the Nordic patterns.

The Nordic terms “stadnamn”, “ortnamn”, “örnefini” etc. comprise all names, whether of topographic features or of human settlements and communities. The German “Ortsname” covers the same wide range of meaning as the English “place name”, a comprehensive term that embraces a whole number of subcategories, such as those corresponding to the German “Siedlungsname” and “Flurnamn”, the Norwegian “bustadnamn”, the English “field name” and the Danish “marknavn”.

A number of terms are used to describe the composition of place names: “first element”, “last element”, “compound name” etc. There are also terms such as “secondary name”, “primary name” and “related name”. There is no uniformity in the use of these terms in the Nordic countries, so that misunderstandings are likely to occur. And in reading literature on the subject written in foreign languages misunderstandings of this kind will inevitably occur because the terminology is not always clearly defined.

For this reason a Nordic symposium will be held in Oslo during the autumn of 1972, at which Nordic terminology will be discussed and clarified. It will hardly
be possible to arrive at a joint Nordic terminology at this early stage. The most important point will be that in the future it should be possible to avoid misunderstandings. The results of the symposium will be made available to other countries.

The Nordic division considers these questions important, and we therefore recommend that these questions should be dealt with and discussed by place-name researchers, cartographers and geographers in every country, and that the results should be distributed.

SOME GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN GUATEMALA*

Report presented by Guatemala

For purposes of information, we present in an addendum to this document a few geographical terms and definitions used in Guatemala, which will be included in the second edition of the Geographical Dictionary of Guatemala. We wish to repeat once again that these do not constitute all that will appear in that work. The writer was obliged, in the circumstances, to make a selection, in order to tell the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names something about the work that has been proceeding on the subject.

Many of the geographical terms and definitions used in Guatemala are the same as those used in the other countries of the Central American isthmus. It is therefore suggested that it might be useful for them to be known as “Central Americanisms” in the future.

The writer wishes, at the same time, to explain that, as he was a member of Committee II on Geographical Terms, of which he had the honour to be Chairman, at the First United Nations Conference, held at Geneva in 1967, and also of specific working group set up at the third session of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names in February 1971, he has not included in the data he is submitting any that appear in the draft glossary of technical terminology for employment in the standardization of geographical names, which he has translated from English into Spanish.

* The original text of this paper, prepared by Francis Gall, submitted in Spanish, was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.71.

1 A list of terms and definitions used in Guatemala was distributed to the participants and issued as document E/CONF.61/L.67/Add.1. Copies are available for reference at the Map Collection of the United Nations. It was decided not to reproduce this list at this stage, pending its completion and acceptance by the United Nations Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names.