

Honourable National Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to express to the honourable national delegates my gratitude for the great honour they have bestowed upon me by electing me President of the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

I wish to assure all of them that I appreciate very much the significance of this election and I will try to do my best in order to fulfil my presidential duties in the most satisfactory way for all of you.

A steadily increasing number of scientists are adopting in recent years the viewpoint according to which our domicile, the Earth, is nothing else but a large space-ship travelling along its orbit in space with its passengers and crew, i.e., the peoples of the world and their leadership and a certain amount of supplies, our natural resources. It is, therefore, up to us to secure the harmless continuation of this marvellous space-travel.

If this picture is true, as the present speaker is inclined to believe, then it is obvious that a necessary condition in order to secure the smooth continuation of our space-travel is to introduce the soonest possible a generally acceptable system for naming the various parts and characteristic points of our space-ship in order to facilitate the mutual understanding of the passengers and crew, in other words to achieve the SGN.

Significant progress has been made so far in the field of SGN. This can be easily seen by studying the proceedings of both the First and the Second UNCSCGN as well as the reports of the sixth session of the UNCEGN, held so far under the auspices of the Transport and Cartography Branch, Centre of Natural Resources, Energy and Transport, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Economic and Social Council. And this progress was of course neither accidental nor easy. It was achieved thanks to the hard and systematic work of all the members of the UNCEGN, who prepared the work of the First and Second UNCSCGN and secured the implementation of their recommendations as well as thanks to the parallel efforts of the participants and especially of the officers of the First and Second UNCSCGN. It is, therefore, an agreeable duty for me to use this opportunity in order to express our gratitude to Mr. M.F. Burrill (United States of America), President of the First UNCSCGN and Mr. H.A.G. Lewis (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) President of the Second UNCSCGN, as well as to Mr. C. N. Christopher, Executive Secretary of both Conferences, for their valuable contributions.

Especially, I would like to draw the attention of the participants of the Conference to the urgent problem of the standardization of names of topographical features on the Moon and the Planets.

Thanks to the spectacular progress made in recent years in the field of space exploration, especially by the USA and the USSR, tens of thousands of new topographical features have been already identified or will be soon identified on the surface of the Moon and the Planets and are awaiting their names.

The Working Group on Planetary System Nomenclature of the International Astronomical Union, under the Chairmanship of Mr. P. Millman and the recently established Advisory Committee on Extraterrestrial Feature Names of BGN under the Chairmanship of Mr. W.E. Brunk have certainly done so far an excellent job in this respect.

The problem of Planetary System Nomenclature, however, as an essential part of the wider problem of Space Exploration is, in the opinion of the present speaker, a too precious undertaking to be left at the discretion of any group of experts of either the International Astronomical Union or any other scientific organization.

It is, therefore, my hope that some action could be taken during our Conference which would make it possible for all the nations of the world to take an active part in the procedures of naming extraterrestrial topographical features.

With these thoughts in mind, I would like to take over the chair and I wish to all of you a fruitful participation in the Conference and a nice stay in the country where Science and Democracy were born.

Third United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names
Athens, 17 August-7 September 1977

A D D R E S S

by

Professor L.N. Mavridis
President of the Conference

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