

Fifth Session of the UN Group of  
Experts on Geographical Names

WORKING PAPER No. 36

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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON UNDERSEA AND MARITIME FEATURES

FIFTH SESSION - GROUP OF EXPERTS, 1973

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

This Working Group was established by the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Geographical Names during the Second Session, March 1970. The Working Group was directed to "create guide lines for name applications, the definition of descriptive terminology, methods of recording and stabilizing undersea nomenclature, and the determination of the agency or agencies best suited to centralize and disseminate such information" (UN document ESA/RT/C/GN/1, April 29, 1970). These terms were expanded by the London Conference to include consideration of maritime features.

## PREAMBLE

In the discussions of this Working Group, the work done at earlier sessions of the Group of Experts was reviewed and the outcome of this work as expressed in resolutions of the London Conference was examined.

It was considered that resolutions 22, 23 and 26B were particularly significant for guidance of the Group in future activities. Attention was directed to the following paraphrases of the pertinent resolutions:

### Resolution 22

...study existing national and international practices concerning the delimitation and naming of oceans and seas, including their integral subdivisions, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, with a view to recommending improvements in current nomenclatural practices and procedures.

### Resolution 23

...work on a model statement or statements on the treatment of undersea feature names that can be suggested for adoption by interested countries;

...develop model forms for proposing names of undersea features...patterned after those used by the United States Board on Geographic Names and by similar organizations in other countries, and a form or forms for use by a national names authority in notifying any interested countries or institutions of its intention to name an undersea feature.

### Resolution 26B

...attempt to standardize the definitions of undersea feature terms and definitions.

Working paper no. 23 of the Fifth Session prepared by the Group co-ordinator suggested as starting points for consideration :

- (a) an examination of the I.H.O. publication "Limits of Oceans and Seas",
- (b) an examination of the Principles and the Reporting Form used in publication No. 111, the USBGN Gazetteer Of Undersea Feature Names,
- (c) an examination of the list of generic terms and their definitions issued by the International Hydrographic Organization .

Members of the Working Group present at the meeting were as follows:

- Mr. Komkov(U.S.S.R)
- Mr. Burrill(U.S.A.)
- Mr. Lewis(U.K.)
- Mr. Ormeling(Netherlands)
- Mr. Meynen(West Germany)
- Mr. Hovda(Norway)
- Mr. Delaney(Canada) co-ordinator

Mr. Sharma, representing India, was absent.

GIST OF DISCUSSIONS:

There was general agreement that the resolutions indicated in working paper no. 23 constituted those with which the Working Group should now be concerned. Dr. Burrill advanced the view that no attempt should be made, at least at this stage, to incorporate regulations regarding the treatment of undersea feature names in an international convention. Rather, he felt that agreement on names proposed should be worked out by obtaining a concensus among those nations concerned with such names by the interchange of information of intent.

It was also agreed that the extension of the Working Groups terms of reference to "maritime features", as indicated in resolutions 22 and 23 of the London Conference, should not be interpreted as embracing terrestrial feature names.

In consideration of the publication "Limits of Oceans and Seas" and its accompanying maps, it was agreed that the terms "delimitation" and "limits", and the use of the <sup>first</sup> term in Resolution 22, should not be

interpreted in a legal sense in the work of the Group, but only in relation to delimitation for the purpose of envisaging the extent of areas to which names might apply for general reference purposes. It was also observed that care should be taken to avoid overlapping the work of other agencies engaged in the same areas of activity, but rather that every effort should be made to inform national and international hydrographic organizations of what the United Nations concerns in this field are. Attention was drawn to I.H.O. circular letter no. 28 of July, 1972, in which conformity to the principles advanced by the United Nations Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names is urged on its members, and copies of the circular were provided to the Group of Experts.

It was evident from the discussion that the consideration of the revision of Limits of Oceans and Seas may be needed in terms of other possible uses by oceanographers and others, and the Working Group needs to examine the publication in these terms. Similarly, the exploration of the details of model forms and of undersea naming principles call for much close examination by the various countries having interests in this area, and that can only be done by subsequent exchange of views, and the evaluation of accumulated opinions.

### CONCLUSIONS

The working Group concluded that:

1. Correspondence should be entered into with concerned countries respecting the suitability of the Limits of Oceans and Seas, as stated in the I.H.O. publication, from the standpoint of less specific purposes than designed by the I.H.O.,
2. That countries should be invited to comment on the Principles and Proposal Form used in the USBCN gazetteer on undersea feature names and Antarctic feature names with a view to constructing principles and forms acceptable for United Nations purposes in this context,
3. That organizations such as the International Hydrographic Bureau and the oceanographic scientific community generally should be fully informed of the activities of this Working Group.
4. That the group co-ordinator should initiate this correspondence with the object of enabling firm proposals respecting Naming

Principles, Name Proposal Forms and Generic Term Definitions to be presented to the Sixth Session of the Group of Experts.

G.F. Delaney,  
Group Co-ordinator

Addenda: Documents Attached

1. Principles of naming of undersea features from the U.S. Board on Geographic Names Gazetteers on Undersea Features.
2. Undersea Feature Name Proposal Form - from source quoted above.
3. Antarctic Name Proposal Form prepared by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

tenance and gazetteer preparation are done by the Geographic Names Division of the United States Army Topographic Command.

#### Undersea name policies

BCN policies applied in the official standardization of the approved names in this gazetteer are as follows:

1. The Board will consider appropriate name proposals by United States nationals for undersea features in international waters.
2. The Board will consider name proposals for features under United States territorial waters on the same basis as other domestic names.
3. Prior to the naming of a feature, identification of its character, extent and position shall have been established sufficiently for identification. Positions shall be given in terms of geographic coordinates. If it is necessary to refer to a feature before such full identifiability has been established, it is suggested that the reference be by coordinates and generic term with the addition of (PA) after the coordinates if the position is not adequately established and (?) after the generic if the nature of the feature is in some doubt.
4. Undersea names in the immediate vicinity of the coast of another country will be treated as names in that country.
5. The Board will ordinarily approve names of undersea features beyond limits of the United States that are bestowed, or approved, by other countries or nationals of other countries unless there is some conflict or other question. Generics in English, if appropriate to the feature, will be accepted; those in other languages will be translated.
6. Guidelines for selection of specific terms.
  - A. It is long-established BCN policy to favor short and simple names as the most efficient, other things being equal.
  - B. Specific terms in the names of major undersea features should, wherever feasible, indicate the general location

of the area in which they lie, e.g., Mariana Trench, Ninetyeast Ridge.

- (1) In some cases, this can be accomplished simply by using the same specific term in the names of adjoining features, e.g., Aleutian Ridge, Aleutian Basin, Aleutian Trench, Mariana Ridge, and Mariana Trench, Bellona Plateau, Bellona Reefs, Bellona Shoal.
  - (2) In some cases, the specific term may indicate direction from a large well-known associated feature, e.g., South Honshu Ridge, West Caroline Basin.
  - (3) In cases where extent of a long linear feature needs to be identified and the extremities can be identified by named geographic features, the names of those features may be hyphenated as the specific terms, e.g., Azores-Gibraltar Ridge, Peru-Chile Trench.
  - (4) Canyons, since they usually extend close to the shore, are normally given as specific terms the names of rivers, points or other readily identifiable named land features, e.g., and Barrow Canyon, Scripps Canyon and Ascension Canyon.
- C. Specific names for other features can be derived from ships or other vehicles utilized in the discovery of the feature, from expedition names, individuals associated with the discovery, organizations and institutions sponsoring the expedition or from individuals who have specifically been involved in the recognition of the uniqueness of the feature through the interpretation of the data.
- (1) Names of ships may be applied to features such as seamounts, knolls, canyons, tablemounts, etc. The ship name to be used should be that of the discovering ship, or if that has been previously used for a similar feature, it should be the name of the ship verifying the feature, e.g., San Pablo Seamount, Atlantis II Seamounts.

(2) Specific names of vehicles utilized in the discovery of a feature may be used, as in the Kiwi Seamount from the geomagnetic survey plane "KIWI" under Project MAGNET which discovered its existence through a magnetic anomaly.

(3) Expedition names may be used, e.g., Northern Holiday Seamount.

(4) Names of individuals associated with the discovery of a feature may be used, including any of the following:

- a. The captain of the ship.
- b. Expedition leaders, or survey party chiefs.
- c. Individuals in charge at the time of discovery and recognition of the feature.

(5) Individuals involved in the interpretation of data leading to the recognition of the unique character of a feature, e.g., bathymetrists, oceanographers, geologists, hydrographers.

(6) Persons who have made important contributions to knowledge of the oceans, including the interpretation of oceanic data, or the preparation of charts of the oceans such as historical hydrographers, oceanographers, and scientists, e.g., Maury Channel, Ewing Seamount.

(7) Organizations and institutions involved in the study of the seas, such as Scripps Canyon.

(8) Names of persons prominent in the past history of the nation.

D. It is permissible to name groups of features after specific categories of historical personages, mythical figures, stars, and constellations, fish, birds, animals, etc. Such groups could be as follows:

*Musicians Seamounts:* Bach Seamount, Brahms Seamount, Schubert Seamount

*Electricians Seamounts:* Volta Seamount, Ampere Seamount, Galvani Seamount

Ursa Minor Ridge and Trough Province, Kochab Ridge, Polaris Trough, Suhail Ridge

E. Descriptive names will be acceptable if not duplicated, particularly when they refer to distinguishing characteristics, e.g., Hook Ridge, Horseshoe Seamounts.

F. Names considered inappropriate include:

- (1) Names applied to similar features elsewhere.
- (2) Full names or unwieldy titles of individuals, institutions or organizations.
- (3) Names of commercial products or their manufacturers.
- (4) Names of individuals proposed because of relationship or friendship with the proponent.

7. Existing names that have been applied for many years may be accepted even though they do not coincide with the above policy.

#### Name proposal form

Undersea name proposal forms are provided in this publication to facilitate submittal and expedite approval and promulgation of names. Anyone may propose a name for an unnamed undersea feature that has been adequately identified as to type and geographic location.

Use a separate form for each name proposed, copying the form if necessary, and filling in all the blanks that are pertinent. Give coordinates of latitude and longitude ordinarily taken at the approximate center of the feature and read fine enough to identify the feature, ordinarily the nearest degree for basins, or the nearest minute for smaller features such as canyons.

For "kind of feature," use the appropriate term from the list of designations and definitions in the current edition of the BCN Gazetteer of Undersea Features. This term will ordinarily be used also as the generic term in the name. If the feature is of a

submitted to

UNDERSEA FEATURE NAME PROPOSAL

Ocean or Sea \_\_\_\_\_ Name proposed \_\_\_\_\_  
Lat. \_\_\_\_\_ (N) (S), Long. \_\_\_\_\_ (E) (W); \_\_\_\_\_ nautical miles in \_\_\_\_\_ direction  
from \_\_\_\_\_

Description: Kind of feature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Identifying or categorizing characteristics (size, shape, dimensions, least depth, steepness, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Associated features: \_\_\_\_\_

Chart reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Shown and named on chart (map) \_\_\_\_\_  
Shown but not named on chart (map) \_\_\_\_\_  
Not shown but within area covered by \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for choice of name: \_\_\_\_\_  
If for a person, state how associated with the feature to be named \_\_\_\_\_

Discovery facts: Date \_\_\_\_\_; by (individuals or ship) \_\_\_\_\_

By means of (equipment): \_\_\_\_\_  
Navigation used: \_\_\_\_\_  
Estimated positional accuracy in nautical miles: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of survey (track spacing, line crossings, grid network, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

TEAR OUT ALONG THIS LINE

(OVER)

*International Standard Form*



Use other side  
where necessary

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BOARD ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

No. 153  
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ANTARCTIC NAME PROPOSAL

NAME PROPOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION: Kind of feature \_\_\_\_\_ Lat. \_\_\_\_\_ S., Long. \_\_\_\_\_ E.  
W.

\_\_\_\_\_ nautical miles distant from \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_ direction.

Map Reference (air chart, H.O. chart, map title, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Identifying Characteristics (size, shape, length, width, height, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Photo Reference (vertical, oblique, other.) \_\_\_\_\_

Materials Submitted \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPORTING DATA: Reason for Choice \_\_\_\_\_

Date discovered, seen, recorded, mapped, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

By whom \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Information (of honoree) \_\_\_\_\_

Expedition \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Data Submitted (surveys, charts, photos, other.) \_\_\_\_\_

to be returned   
not to be returned

SUBMITTED BY: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Rank or official duties \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

CODE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE RECEIVED \_\_\_\_\_

CASE SECTION \_\_\_\_\_ PROMULGATION \_\_\_\_\_