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GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 5 to 16 March 1973

Problems of the Standardization
of the Names beyond a Single Sovereignty

The Working Group on the names of extraterrestrial topographic features was charged, at the 4th session of the Group of Experts on geographical names, June, 1, 1972, with special studying of the problems connected with the naming of features beyond the limits of a national jurisdiction.

The Conference documents L.22, L.25, L.61, L.76, L.78, L.91 submitted by Austria, Netherlands, Norway, U.S.S.R. and F.R.G. note that the existing practices in naming geographical features beyond the limits of national jurisdiction as well as of extraterrestrial topographic features present an obstacle to insertion of names that received the international recognition in maps and other documents for international use, for the absence of an international convention determining the principles and procedures of naming such entities.

The Conference adopted the following resolution.

Resolution 24Standardization of names beyond a single sovereigntyThe Conference,

Recognizing the increased tempo and volume of research and investigations of the World ocean, Antarctic and space including the Moon and solar planets,

Recognizing further, that the absence of an international document determining the rules and procedures of naming and designating features beyond a single sovereignty presents an obstacle to production and application of maps and other documents for international use,

Considering that a special document elaborated under the auspices of the United Nations might provide a general base for adopting technical rules and procedures for the naming and re-naming of various kinds of extraterrestrial topographic features and geographical features beyond a single sovereignty ,

Recommends that United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names give consideration to the elaboration of such a document in collaboration with the corresponding United Nations bodies and other international organizations competent in this problem.

In this connexion it should also be reminded of Resolution 34 of the London Conference which points out that the field of application of international standardization of geographical names extends to the establishment of standardized

names of geographical entities lying beyond a single sovereignty.

The experts on the international law are of the opinion that since international scientific organizations, such as the IAU, the IGU and others, are non-governmental their decisions cannot be referred to as binding for official application in different countries. In such cases the scientific non-governmental organizations may adopt only recommendations to be considered and approved by appropriate inter-governmental bodies; to acquire the status of binding, these recommendations must be ratified by the member state governments of the inter-governmental bodies.

The problem is really very difficult. We are, probably, to think it over again, to ask lawyers for advice and to exchange views before we come to a definite decision. I think that the plan of work of our Group for the period till our next meeting should envisage the solution of the problem.

A. Komkov

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Co-ordinator of the Working
Group on the names of extraterrestrial
topographic features