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CARTOGRAPHY

Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of  
Geographical Names

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, convened in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1983/L20, was held at Montreal, Canada, from 18 to 31 August 1987.
2. The Conference was attended by 106 representatives and observers from 53 countries, 1/ 1 specialized agency 2/ and 3 international scientific organizations. 3/
3. The agenda for the Conference was prepared by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its twelfth session (Geneva, September/October 1986). The Conference considered the reports of linguistic/geographical divisions and of Governments on the situation in their regions and countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Fourth Conference. It established three committees, on national, technical and international programmes, respectively, to consider national standardization - including field collection and office treatment of names, treatment of names in multilingual areas, the administrative structure of national names authorities and toponymic guidelines for map and other editors - and items related to the creation of toponymic data files, the reduction of exonyms, terminology, the naming of features beyond a single sovereignty, romanization

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\* E/1988/30.

and conversion into non-Roman writing systems, the writing of names in unwritten languages and toponymic education and practice. In addition, the Conference considered the economic and social benefits of national and international standardization of geographical names, the measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names, technical assistance and international co-operation.

4. The proceedings of the Conference are to be published in two volumes, volume I containing the report of the Conference and the resolutions adopted and volume II, the technical papers submitted to the Conference. 4/

5. The Conference adopted 26 resolutions. It recognized, in particular, the work performed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and recommended the adoption of the statute of the Group which defined its structure and activities. It recommended that a Celtic Division and an East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic) of the Group of Experts be established. It also recommended that the Group of Experts prepare a syllabus for training courses in toponymy, adaptable to the needs of the countries concerned, that it investigate the possibility of preparing guidelines for the direct exchange of toponymic information between various computer systems, that it collect basic information on the national standardization of geographical names and that it establish liaison with the Pan American Institute of Geography and History to ensure optimal co-operation. The Conference recommended the adoption of romanization systems for the Russian Cyrillic alphabet and the Greek alphabet and, for consideration by the Group of Experts, a system for the romanization of Korean script for use in geographical names. It recommended that toponyms be differentiated from other map text, that the use of exonyms be further reduced and that precedence be given to national official forms of geographical names. It urged the establishment of national geographical names authorities and encouraged State authorities to provide appropriate support for standardization activities and to organize bilateral and multilateral meetings. The Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations Secretariat was encouraged to increase its involvement in the preparation and co-ordination of United Nations publications that facilitate the exchange of information and transfer of knowledge in the field of geographical names. The Conference recommended the publication by the United Nations of a manual on national standardization, toponymic guidelines and a semi-annual information bulletin. The Conference made recommendations on the uniformity of presentation of national reports to be presented at future conferences and recommended the Economic and Social Council to convene the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in Morocco in 1992.

6. A summary of resolutions adopted by the Conference is contained in annex I below. The statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, adopted by the Group of Experts at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions and endorsed by the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, subject to review and approval by the Economic and Social Council, as well as the rules of procedure of the Group, is contained in annex II below. A recommendation for action by the Council is contained in annex I, paragraph 26.

7. A statement of the programme budget implications that would arise as a result of the adoption of the recommendation will be submitted as an addendum to the present report.

Notes

1/ Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia.

2/ International Civil Aviation Organization.

3/ International Cartographic Association, International Geographical Union, Organisation islamique pour l'éducation les sciences et la culture.

4/ Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Montreal, 18-31 August 1987, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.88.I.7 and corrigendum) and vol. II, Technical Papers (forthcoming).

Annex I

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE FIFTH UNITED NATIONS  
CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

A. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

1. The Conference, noting that, by resolution 22, the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names a/ recommended that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names examine the possibility of preparing a single document defining the structure and activities of the Group and noting also that, at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions, the Group adopted the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, b/ recommended that henceforth the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names be the basic document governing the work of the Group (resolution 2).
2. The Conference, considering that the composition of the linguistic/geographical divisions should enhance the work of the Group of Experts and noting the preferences expressed by the Group at its eleventh and twelfth sessions, c/ recommended that the number of linguistic/geographical divisions in the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names be increased by two: a Celtic Division and an East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic) (resolution 3).
3. The Conference, recognizing the positive results achieved by the Group of Experts, considering that during the period between United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names the Group is the only body within the United Nations system dealing with problems relating to geographical names at the international level, and wishing to ensure that the activities of the Group are maximized at all times and to consolidate those programmes that most effectively promote national and international standardization, recommended that the Group of Experts continue to pursue actively its responsibilities as defined in its statute and in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the Fifth Conference and recommended also that a working group be established within the Group to
  - (a) evaluate the activities of the Group and investigate fresh approaches and new avenues to achieve its goals and objectives in the most efficient manner,
  - (b) review the resolutions adopted by the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names and report on their implementation and
  - (c) report on its findings to the Group at its fourteenth session (resolution 4).
4. The Conference, aware that the programmes of the Group of Experts concerning undersea features and extra-terrestrial features have been effectively transferred to the International Hydrographic Organization and the International Astronomical Union, respectively, and that the interests of the Group are represented by a liaison officer with both organizations, and aware also that the Pan American Institute of Geography and History has formally expressed support for the programme of the Working Group on Gazetteers and Geographical Names of its Cartography Commission, recommended that the Group of Experts (a) recognize the potential of

the Pan American Institute of Geography and History for accomplishing worthwhile objectives in its areas of operation and (b) establish liaison with the Institute to ensure optimal collaboration between the two bodies (resolution 10).

5. The Conference, noting the progress made by several countries in the field of computer-assisted processing of geographical names and the considerable effort invested in developing such methods, and assuming that an increasing number of countries will avail themselves of those methods, it recommended that the Group of Experts, in consultation with countries that have already developed such methods, investigate the possibility of preparing guidelines for direct communication with, and exchange of toponymic information between, various computer systems (resolution 17).

6. The Conference, taking account of the success and usefulness of the courses in toponymy held at Cisarua, Indonesia, in June 1982 and Rabat, Morocco, in December 1985, and taking account also of the needs and resources as discussed during the Fifth Conference, recommended (a) that courses and seminars in toponymy be held in other geographical divisions, with appropriate financial support from the United Nations, particularly in the linguistic/geographical divisions of Africa East, Latin America and the United States of America/Canada, for English-, Spanish- and French-speaking participants, respectively, and (b) that a syllabus for toponymic training courses, adaptable to the needs of the countries concerned, be prepared by the Group of Experts, to be disseminated with appropriate documents relating to Conference resolutions, national toponymic guidelines, definitions of terms, indexes, data banks, the structure of names authorities and methods of preparing toponymic inventories (resolution 21).

#### B. National standardization

7. The Conference, noting the difficulties and misunderstandings that may arise in distinguishing toponyms from non-toponymic text on maps, recognizing that users whose native language is different from that used on a map may have particular difficulties in this area and recognizing also that the automated scanning of maps by optical electronic means may facilitate the automated recording of toponyms, recommended (a) that a clear typographical distinction be made on national topographical maps between toponyms and text that serves other purposes and (b) that the methods of differentiation be explained in national toponymic guidelines for map and other editors (resolution 11).

8. The Conference, recognizing that basic information on the structure of authorities responsible for standardizing geographical names is both necessary and useful and that the United Nations Secretariat ensures liaison and plays a key role in the area of information and documentation, recommended that the Group of Experts prepare and the United Nations Secretariat distribute a questionnaire for completion by national names authorities, the results to be made available to Member States; the questionnaire would deal with (a) the structure and functions of national names authorities, (b) toponymic data banks and (c) the content and presentation of gazetteers (resolution 12).

9. The Conference, recalling recommendation 28 of the Second Conference d/ and resolution 20 of the Fourth Conference, a/ noting that progress has been made in reducing the use of exonyms in cartography and related fields, observing that the reduction in the use of exonyms is being carried out at different rates in different countries, and considering that many public and private organizations other than names authorities play a significant and effective role in the dissemination of foreign place names, recommended (a) a further reduction in the use of exonyms, (b) more specifically, that countries intensify their efforts to persuade private and public organizations to reduce the use of exonyms in their publications or, at least, to increase the use of geographical names in their local standardized form (that is, endonyms) and (c) that, where exonyms are used in publications, maps and other documents, precedence be given to national official names (resolution 13).
10. The Conference, recalling resolution 4 on the publication by countries of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, adopted by the Fourth Conference a/ noting that while some countries have already complied with that resolution many have not yet done so, and considering the key role played by such publications in attaining the objectives of national standardization as the basis for international standardization, recommended that countries be strongly encouraged to publish and keep up to date toponymic guidelines for map and other editors dealing, inter alia, with the items listed in resolution 4 of the Fourth Conference and that the United Nations Secretariat provide appropriate assistance for the publication and dissemination of such guidelines (resolution 14).
11. The Conference, recalling resolution 4, recommendation A, of the first Conference e/ urged those countries that do not yet have national geographical names authorities to proceed without delay to establish them, with the status, composition, function and procedures specified in resolution 4, recommendation A, of the first Conference using, where appropriate, the information collected in pursuance of resolution 12 of the present Conference [see para. 8 above] and seeking, whenever necessary, technical assistance from countries of the region and from the United Nations (resolution 15).
12. The Conference, considering that a great amount of knowledge and experience has been accumulated in the field of the standardization of geographical names, noting that the resulting material must be collated and disseminated to all countries, and aware that several countries may already have published comprehensive national gazetteers, recommended (a) that each country prepare maps, as well as lists of standardized names, in accordance with resolution 35 of the Second Conference d/ and (b) that the Group of Experts co-ordinate national efforts along the lines recommended in resolution 35 of the Second Conference and report on progress made at future conferences (resolution 16).
13. The Conference, aware that groups of aboriginal/native people exist in many countries throughout the world and that these groups have their own languages, cultures and traditions, and recognizing that the geographical names of these groups are a significant part of the toponymic traditions of every area or country in which they live, recommended (a) that all countries having groups of aboriginal/native people make a special effort to collect their geographical names

along with other appropriate information, (b) that, whenever possible and appropriate, a written form of those names be adopted for official use on maps and other publications and (c) that regional and international meetings be held to discuss the methodology for collecting and recording aboriginal/native geographical names (resolution 22).

14. The Conference, noting that the need for a manual of simplified guidelines to assist Member States with the national standardization of geographical names has repeatedly been expressed and that a manual entitled "Organization and function of a national geographical names standardization programme" has been compiled under the direction of the Group of Experts, recommended that the United Nations publish the manual - perhaps as a volume of World Cartography - as soon as possible, and distribute it widely (resolution 23).

#### C. Romanization systems

15. The Conference, noting that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has officially adopted a system for romanizing geographical names of that country written in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet and that this system has been applied on maps produced in the Soviet Union for international use, recommended that the GOST 1983 system of the Main Administration of Geodesy and Cartography, be adopted as the international system for the romanization of geographical names in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet (resolution 18).

16. The Conference, noting that the conversion of the Greek alphabet into Roman letters has been extensively discussed at earlier United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names and sessions of the Group of Experts, noting also the positive opinion, expressed at the Fourth Conference, on Standard No. 743 (ELOT 743) of the Greek Standardization Organization, prepared by Greece and Cyprus, and recognizing that this system is linguistically sound and suitable for the transcription and transliteration of Greek names, that it has been officially sanctioned by the Governments of Greece and Cyprus for cartographic and administrative purposes, that it has been used for maps of Greece and maps and gazetteers of Cyprus, that a suitable transitional period will be required before the system can be fully implemented and that donor countries should provide practical assistance to receiver countries for that purpose, recommended that the ELOT 743 conversion system be adopted as the international system for the romanization of geographical names in the Greek alphabet (resolution 19).

17. The Conference, recognizing the desirability of a single romanization system for each non-Roman-alphabet language and that the subject of romanization, as referred to in resolution 15 of the Fourth Conference a/ is of paramount concern to the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names, noting the adoption of new guidelines for the romanization of Korean by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and that the guidelines have been applied since January 1984 in the maps and gazetteers published by the Korean authorities, recommended that the guidelines (E/CONF.79/INF/68) be referred to the Group of Experts for consideration as the single international system for the romanization of Korean geographical names (resolution 20).

D. International co-operation and transfer of knowledge

18. The Conference, noting that during the period between United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names countries are involved in intensive activities connected with the standardization of geographical names and noting also that the exchange of ideas and materials substantially contributes to the solution of problems regarding two or more countries belonging to the same geographical area, recommended the organization of bilateral and multilateral meetings in the spirit of the recommendations and resolutions of the Fifth Conference (resolution 5).
19. The Conference, recognizing the importance of geographical names as significant elements of the cultural heritage of nations and the economic advantage of standardizing national geographical names, recommended that State authorities be encouraged to provide appropriate support to standardization activities and that the standardization of geographical names be recognized as an important part of their programmes of international co-operation and technical assistance (resolution 6).
20. The Conference, recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968, by which the Council requested the Group of Experts to collect information issued by international organizations dealing with the standardization of geographical names, and considering that, in order to avoid duplicating the work done by various international organizations on the standardization of geographical names, the Group deems it advisable that those organizations themselves develop standardization activities, in co-ordination with the Group, recommended that all officers responsible for maintaining liaison with those organizations prepare written reports on the activities of organizations for submission to each United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names and each meeting of the Group and that, in the absence of such liaison officers, the Secretariat request the organizations themselves to provide such reports (resolution 8).
21. The Conference, reaffirming the need for the international exchange of information on achievements in the field of national and international standardization of geographical names noted with satisfaction the publication by the United Nations of volume XVIII of World Cartography, f/ devoted to the subject of geographical names, which has been greatly acclaimed by Member States, and recommended that the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations Secretariat be encouraged to increase its involvement in the preparation and co-ordination of United Nations publications that facilitate the exchange of information and transfer of knowledge in the field of geographical names (resolution 9).
22. The Conference, noting the need for a world information network relating to geographical names, recommended that countries provide the United Nations Secretariat with information on their activities related to geographical names and that a semi-annual information bulletin be prepared and disseminated by the United Nations Secretariat to geographical names authorities and cartographic agencies, giving information on (a) activities, such as training courses, new publications and regional meetings, and (b) significant decisions on geographical names (resolution 24).



23. The Conference, recalling resolution 25 of the Second Conference, d/ and considering that it would be useful to know and compare the practical experience acquired by neighbouring countries in the standardization of names of geographical features extending across their common borders, recommended (a) that Member States systematically inform future United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names of their achievements in this field and (b) that those national geographical names authorities which have not yet done so establish with neighbouring authorities joint or interrelated programmes for the collection and treatment of names of features extending across their common borders (resolution 25).

E. Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

24. The Conference, noting the positive results of the work accomplished on the standardization of geographical names at both the national and international levels by States Members of the United Nations, noting also the essential role played by the Fifth Conference in the co-ordination of those efforts, and recognizing the necessity of continuing this important work, expressed its appreciation to the Government of Morocco for its offer to act as host to the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and recommended to the Economic and Social Council that the Sixth Conference be convened in Morocco in the second half of 1992 (resolution 1).

25. The Conference, recognizing that the national reports submitted by each country to the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names contain much information that is useful for the consideration of the various items of the agenda of the conferences, and bearing in mind that, in order to make an adequate evaluation of the progress made by all participating countries, it is important that the documents relating to each item of the agenda be made available to the conferences on time and, when necessary, by each participating country, recommended (a) that the United Nations Secretariat, when sending invitation to Member States to participate in the conferences, attach a detailed plan (model) for the drafting of national reports, providing specific guidelines for countries to follow in reporting on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the preceding conference and (b) that the necessary steps be taken to ensure that all the national reports to be discussed at a conference are distributed to participating countries at least one month before the conference is due to begin (resolution 7).

F. Recommendations for action by the Council

26. The Economic and Social Council may wish:

(a) To endorse the recommendation that the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names be held in the second half of 1992 and to accept the offer of the Government of Morocco to act as host to the Conference;

(b) To request the Secretary-General to take measures, as appropriate, to implement the recommendations of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, especially with regard to the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names;

(c) To approve the statute and rules of procedure of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

Notes

a/ Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Geneva, 24 August-14 September 1982, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.I.7), chap. III.

b/ Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Montreal, 18-31 August 1987, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.88.I.7 and corrigendum), annex V.

c/ See ESA/RT/C/GN/9 and 10.

d/ Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, London, 10-31 May 1972, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.74.I.2), chap. III.

e/ United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Geneva, 4-22 September 1967, vol. I, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.I.9), chap. III.

f/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.I.23.

Annex II

STATUTE AND RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

STATUTE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS  
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES\*

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was established in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolutions 715 A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959 and 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968 and the decision taken by the Council at its 1854th meeting, on 4 May 1973, to further the standardization of geographical names at both the national and international levels.

I. AIMS

The basic aims of the Group of Experts shall be:

- (a) To consider principles and methods for solving problems in the national and international standardization of geographical names;
- (b) To collect information on the work of national and international bodies on the standardization of geographical names and disseminate it to States Members of the United Nations;
- (c) To promote the sharing of experience of national bodies on the standardization of geographical names;
- (d) To encourage the supply of scientific and technical help to developing countries in the national standardization of geographical names.

II. PRINCIPLES

1. The Group of Experts shall act as a collegiate, consultative body; accordingly, agreement on non-procedural matters shall be reached by consensus and not by voting.
2. The decisions of the Group of Experts shall be of a recommendatory character.
3. Questions involving national sovereignty shall not be discussed by the Group of Experts.

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\* Adopted by the Group of Experts at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions and endorsed by the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, subject to review and approval by the Economic and Social Council.

4. The Group of Experts in its activities shall adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the following provisions:

(a) The standardization of geographical names must be based on the achievements of science in relation to both language treatment and the technical means of processing and generating toponymic data;

(b) International standardization of geographical names must be carried out on the basis of national standardization.

### III. FUNCTIONS

To further the aims stated above, the functions of the Group of Experts shall be:

(a) To provide liaison between countries in their work on geographical names;

(b) To co-ordinate between countries their efforts in the standardization of geographical names;

(c) To undertake the preparatory work for the periodic international conferences on the standardization of geographical names;

(d) To provide continuity of action between conferences;

(e) To assist in the implementation of resolutions adopted at conferences;

(f) To consider the formation of linguistic/geographical divisions as rational bases for furthering work at the national level;

(g) To co-ordinate the activities of the divisions;

(h) To maintain liaison with other international organizations dealing with related subjects;

(i) To encourage the divisions and countries to take a more active role in standardization programmes; to this end, divisions should formulate their own working procedures and co-ordinate them with the Group of Experts to ensure uniform content and principles;

(j) To encourage divisions, wherever feasible, to participate in United Nations regional or other cartographic conferences; by convening a divisional meeting in conjunction with a conference, the divisions may take advantage of conference facilities.

#### IV. COMPOSITION

##### 1. Linguistic/geographical divisions

1. The Group of Experts shall be composed of experts from linguistic/geographical divisions designated by Governments. The Group of Experts shall be headed by elected officers who shall guide the activities of the Group during and between its sessions.

2. The Group of Experts shall be supported in its activities by the following linguistic/geographical divisions:

Africa Central Division;

Africa East Division;

Africa West Division;

Arabic Division;

Asia East Division (other than China);

Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division;

Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic);

Celtic Division;

China Division;

Dutch- and German-speaking Division;

East Central and South-East Europe Division;

East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic);

India Division;

Latin America Division;

Norden Division;

Romano-Hellenic Division;

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Division;

United Kingdom Division;

United States of America/Canada Division.

3. The number of linguistic/geographical divisions and their composition may be revised, if necessary.
4. A country shall decide for itself the division to which it wishes to belong. A country may be a member of another division provided the nature of its participation does not change the linguistic/geographical character of the division(s) concerned. An expert may be invited to attend meetings of other divisions in the capacity of observer or consultant.
5. Each division, if composed of more than one sovereign State, shall select, by methods of its own choosing, an expert to represent the division (Division Chairman) as a whole at the meetings of the Group of Experts.
6. In order to guarantee the continuity of the work, each division having more than one sovereign State shall select an alternative representative; the divisional representative shall act in close contact with his alternate.
7. The divisional representative shall stimulate activities in the standardization of geographical names within his division by all appropriate means (correspondence with national bodies on the standardization of geographical names and national surveying and mapping agencies; organization of meetings of the divisional experts).
8. The divisional representative shall be responsible for ensuring that the work of the Group of Experts and its potential for technical assistance are brought to the attention of the individual countries in his division and for reporting to the United Nations any special problems in his division.
9. To discuss technical and procedural matters, a division may organize regional meetings during United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names and meetings of the Group of Experts, or at any other appropriate time.

## 2. Officers

1. The Group of Experts shall elect the following officers: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Rapporteur.
2. All provisions regarding the election and functioning of the officers are given below in the rules of procedure of the Group.

## 3. Working groups

1. Working groups shall be disbanded upon completion of their appointed tasks. The expediency of extending the term of their activities shall be considered at the sessions of the Group of Experts. If necessary, new working groups may be appointed and their tasks determined.
2. The convenor and the co-convenor of a working group shall be elected at the meetings of the working group by methods of its own choosing.

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS  
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

I. DEFINITIONS

Meaning of terms

Rule 1

For the purposes of these rules, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

(a) "Group" or "Group of Experts" means the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names established in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolutions 715 A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959 and 1314 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968 and the decision taken by the Council at its 1854th meeting, on 4 May 1973;

(b) "Member" means an expert participating in a session of the Group, whether or not he/she represents a division;

(c) "Division" means one of the major linguistic/geographical divisions of the world, as defined in section IV of the statute of the Group;

(d) "Secretary-General" means the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

II. MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION

Rule 2

1. The Group of Experts shall consist of experts in the field of cartography/linguistics designated by Governments of States members of the respective divisions.

2. The expert who represents a division shall be a full member of the Group, with voting rights. In addition, States members of the divisions may appoint national experts who may participate, without the right to vote, in the discussions at meetings of the Group. Attendance at Group meetings by the latter experts shall be co-ordinated with the expert representing the division in question, who shall have the right to vote on behalf of the division.

3. All experts participating in sessions of the Group shall serve in their personal capacity as individuals of recognized competence and experience in their respective fields.

### III. SESSIONS

#### Rule 3

The Group shall normally hold one session every two years, at such times as it determines; provided that in years when a United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names is held, the Group shall meet, as required, on dates immediately preceding the opening date of the conference and immediately following the closing date of the conference.

### IV. AGENDA

#### Rule 4

The provisional agenda drawn up by the Group at its previous session and communicated to the Governments invited by the Secretary-General to send experts to participate in the session shall constitute the provisional agenda for the session. Experts participating in the session may propose additional items for inclusion in the provisional agenda.

### V. OFFICERS

#### Election and term of office

#### Rule 5

The Group shall elect the following officers from among the experts representing divisions: a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Rapporteur.

#### Rule 6

The officers shall be elected immediately following the closing date of the respective United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. The officers shall serve until their successors are elected immediately after the next conference.

#### Replacement

#### Rule 7

1. If the Chairman is to be absent from a meeting or part thereof, or if he ceases to be able to perform his functions, the Vice-Chairman or, in his absence, the Rapporteur shall act as Chairman.
2. The Vice-Chairman or Rapporteur when acting as Chairman shall have the same powers and duties as the Chairman.



3. If either the Vice-Chairman or the Rapporteur is unable to perform the functions of his office, the Chairman shall appoint an expert to complete the unexpired portion of either term of office.

## VI. SECRETARIAT

### Duties of the secretariat

#### Rule 8

The Secretary of the Group, appointed by the Secretary-General, shall act in that capacity in all meetings of the Group. He may designate a member of the secretariat to take his place at any meeting.

#### Rule 9

The Secretary shall as far as possible provide and direct such staff as is required by the Group. He shall be responsible for making all necessary arrangements for meetings and generally shall perform all other work which the Group may require.

### Statements by the secretariat

#### Rule 10

The Secretary or his representative may at any meeting make either oral or written statements concerning any questions under consideration.

## VII. CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

### Quorum

#### Rule 11

A majority of the representatives of divisions participating in the session shall constitute a quorum.

### General powers of the Chairman

#### Rule 12

In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon him elsewhere by these rules, the Chairman shall declare the opening and closing of each meeting of the Group, direct the discussion at such meetings, ensure the observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce

decisions. He shall rule on the points of order and, subject to these rules, shall have complete control over the proceedings of the Group and over the maintenance of order at its meetings.

Rule 13

The Chairman may, in the course of the discussions, propose to the Group the closing of the list of speakers or the adjournment or closure of the debate. He may call a speaker to order if his remarks are not relevant to the matter under discussion. The Chairman may also propose the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting.

Rule 14

The Chairman, in the exercise of his functions, remains under the authority of the Group.

Points of order

Rule 15

During the discussion of any matter, a member may at any time raise a point of order, which shall be immediately decided by the Chairman in accordance with these rules. A member may appeal against the ruling of the Chairman. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote and the Chairman's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the representatives of divisions present and voting. A member may not, in raising a point of order, speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Time-limit on speeches

Rule 16

The Group may limit the time allowed to each speaker and the number of times a member may speak on any question. When the debate is limited and a member exceeds his allotted time, the Chairman shall call him to order without delay.

Closing of list of speakers

Rule 17

During the course of a debate, the Chairman may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the Group, declare the list closed. The Chairman may, however, accord the right of reply to any member if, in his opinion, a speech delivered after he had declared the list closed makes this desirable. When there

are no more speakers, the Chairman shall, with the consent of the Group, declare the debate closed. Such closure shall have the same effect as closure pursuant to rule 19.

#### Adjournment of debate

##### Rule 18

During the discussion of any matter, a member may move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. Any such motion shall have priority. In addition to the proposer of the motion, one member shall be allowed to speak in favour of, and one member against the motion, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote.

#### Closure of debate

##### Rule 19

A member may at any time move the closure of the debate on the item under discussion, whether or not any other member has signified his wish to speak. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded to only two speakers opposing the closure, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote.

#### Withdrawal of proposals or motions

##### Rule 20

A proposal or a motion may be withdrawn by its sponsor at any time before voting on it has commenced, provided that it has not been amended. A proposal or a motion thus withdrawn may be reintroduced by any member.

#### Reconsideration of proposals

##### Rule 21

When a proposal has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same session unless the Group, by a two-thirds majority of the representatives of divisions present and voting, so decides. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider shall be accorded to only two speakers opposing the motion, after which it shall be immediately put to the vote.

Invitations to specialists (technical advisers)

Rule 22

A person with specialized knowledge of particular aspects of the standardization of geographical names may be invited to place before the Group of Experts his/her specialized knowledge. Such a person will be invited only when official approval of the invitation has been obtained from his/her Government.

VIII. DECISION-MAKING

Consensus

Rule 23

1. On all except procedural matters, the Group of Experts, its linguistic/geographical divisions and its working groups shall arrive at decisions by consensus. In the event that a consensus is not achieved, the matter shall be deferred for reworking and resubmission.
2. In the absence of a consensus on procedural matters, the Chairman may, and at the request of any member shall, put the proposal to the vote.

Voting rights and majority required

Rule 24

1. Each expert representing a division shall have one vote, and decisions of the Group shall, subject to rule 23, be taken by a majority of the divisional representatives present and voting.
2. If a vote is equally divided, a second vote shall be taken after an adjournment of the meeting for 15 minutes. If this vote is also equally divided, the proposal or motion shall be regarded as rejected.

Meaning of the phrase "representatives of divisions present and voting"

Rule 25

For the purpose of these rules, the phrase "representatives of divisions present and voting" means representatives of divisions casting an affirmative or negative vote. Representatives of divisions who abstain from voting shall be considered as not voting.

Roll-call votes

Rule 26

A roll-call vote, if requested, shall be taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the divisions, beginning with the division whose name is drawn by lot by the Chairman.

Conduct during voting

Rule 27

After the Chairman has announced the commencement of voting, no member shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting. Explanations of their votes by members may, however, be permitted by the Chairman either before or after the voting. The Chairman may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations.

Division of proposals

Rule 28

Parts of a proposal shall be voted on separately if a member requests that the proposal be divided. Those parts of the proposal that have been approved shall then be put to the vote as a whole; if all the operative parts of the proposal have been rejected, the proposal shall be considered rejected as a whole.

Order of voting on amendments

Rule 29

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be voted on first. When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the Group shall first vote on the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal and then on the amendment next furthest removed therefrom, and so on, until all the amendments have been put to the vote. When, however, the adoption of one amendment necessarily implies the rejection of another amendment, the latter amendment shall not be put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted upon. A proposal is considered an amendment to another proposal if it merely adds to, deletes from or revises part of that proposal.

Order of voting on proposals

Rule 30

1. If two or more proposals relate to the same question, they shall, unless the Group decides otherwise, be voted on in the order in which they are submitted. The Group may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.
2. Revised proposals shall be voted on in the order in which the original proposals were submitted, unless the revision substantially departs from the original proposal. In that case, the original proposal shall be considered as withdrawn and the revised proposal shall be treated as a new proposal.
3. A motion requiring that no decision be taken on a proposal shall have priority over that proposal.

Elections

Rule 31

1. All elections shall be held by secret ballot unless the Group decides otherwise.
2. When candidates are to be nominated, each nomination shall be made by only one member, after which the Group shall immediately proceed to the election.

Balloting

Rule 32

1. When one or more elective places are to be filled at one time under the same conditions, each member may cast a vote for as many candidates as there are places to be filled, and those candidates, in a number not exceeding the number of such places, obtaining in the first ballot a majority of the votes cast and the largest number of votes shall be elected.
2. If the number of candidates so elected is less than the number of places to be filled, additional ballots shall be held to fill the remaining places. From such ballots the candidates obtaining the least number of votes in the previous ballot may be eliminated on the proposal of the Chairman.
3. In the case of a tie among candidates obtaining a majority of the votes cast, a second ballot shall be held among them. If the votes remain equally divided, the elder or eldest candidate shall be elected.

IX. LANGUAGES

Official and working languages

Rule 33

Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish shall be the official languages and English, French and Spanish shall be the working languages of the session. Working papers shall be submitted in one of the working languages.

Interpretation

Rule 34

1. Speeches made in an official language shall be interpreted into the other official languages of the session.
2. Any member may make a speech in a language other than an official language of the session if he provides for interpretation into one such language. Interpretation into the other official languages of the session by the interpreters of the secretariat may be based on the interpretation given in the first such language.

X. DOCUMENTS

Rule 35

1. The secretariat of the Group of Experts circulates copies of working papers submitted by linguistic/geographical divisions and experts to the participants in the session.
2. Submission of a working paper for consideration by the Group of Experts does not mean the document has received the approval of the Group of Experts or that the working paper has been endorsed by them.
3. Consideration of a working paper by the Group of Experts is without political significance.
4. Consideration and discussion of a working paper by the Group of Experts must not be interpreted as support of, or opposition to, any political view or issue.
5. Subsequent reference to the working papers in the report of the Group of Experts on the session likewise shall have no political significance.

XI. RECORDS

Records of meetings and of the session

Rule 36

Sound recordings of the plenary meetings of the session shall be made and kept by the secretariat. The Group shall prepare a final report in English as the record of the session. This report shall be distributed by the secretariat as soon as possible after the closing of the session.

XII. PRIVACY OF MEETINGS

Rule 37

The meetings of the Group and meetings of its working groups shall be held in private.

XIII. SESSIONAL BODIES AND WORKING GROUPS

Sessional bodies

Rule 38

During sessions of the Group, ad hoc study groups may be appointed to deal with particular issues. Upon completion of their appointed tasks, such groups shall be automatically disbanded before the end of the session, unless especially directed to remain in existence.

Intersessional working groups

Rule 39

The Group may establish working groups of specialists under the chairmanship of one of the national experts referred to in rule 2 to study particular problems between sessions of the Group.

Rules of procedure

Rule 40

So far as they are applicable, the rules of procedure of the Group shall apply to the proceedings of the sessional bodies and working groups. These bodies may, however, dispense with certain language interpretations.



XIV. PARTICIPATION BY NON-MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

Rule 41

1. Representatives designated by the specialized agencies and observers designated by other intergovernmental organizations and by non-governmental organizations invited to the session may participate, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Group and its working groups on the invitation of the Chairman or the convenor of a working group on questions within the scope of their activities.

2. Written statements submitted by these representatives or observers shall be distributed by the secretariat to all participants in the session.

XV. AMENDMENTS

Rule 42

These rules of procedure may be amended by a decision of the Group, taken by a two-thirds majority of the divisional representatives present and voting. No amendment shall become effective until it has been approved by the Economic and Social Council.

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