



**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.  
LIMITED

E/CONF.79/L.14  
23 June 1987

ENGLISH ONLY

---

Fifth United Nations Conference  
on the Standardization of  
Geographical Names  
Montreal, 18-31 August 1987  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR  
REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON PROGRESS IN THE STANDARDIZATION  
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FOURTH CONFERENCE

Report by the USA/Canada Division of the United Nations  
Group of Experts on Geographical Names\*\*

Paper submitted by the United States/Canada Division

---

\* E/CONF.79/1.

\*\* Prepared by Richard R. Randall, Chairman of the USA/Canada Division.

REPORT OF THE USA/CANADA DIVISION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS  
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

During the time since the Fourth Conference, neither the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) nor the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN) felt any pressing need to have a divisional meeting on a regular basis. Continuous communications between the two organizations were seen able to address any concerns and to resolve perceived problems. In addition, individual representatives of the countries participated fully in a variety of programs related to names questions.

Late in 1985, however, BGN invited Mr. Rayburn, Executive Secretary of CPCGN, to Washington, D. C. to a divisional meeting to discuss programs of the United Nations and of the Group of Experts as well. Conclusions were of a broad yet significant level. In a paper submitted to the 12th Session of the UN Group of Experts, the division agreed that: 1. National standardization programs should remain the most important goal; 2. appropriate control of sessions should be maintain to assure the best flow of business; 3. Working Groups should have co-convenors to act in the absence of appointed convenors; 4. UN resolutions should be organized and issued as a single document for more efficient reference; 5. registration forms should include full details on addresses to ensure effective correspondence among experts; 6. any UN training course should follow a standard curriculum; and 7. consideration should be given to the formation of divisions with differing structures. Some of these points were subsequently acted on, but the Division proposes further attention on others.

Other matters of common concern have been addressed. For example, both national bodies have long recognized that a number of features common to both countries have different names. To overcome the problem of seemingly conflicting names, a joint body was established to draft principles, policies, and procedures for dealing with such names. A series of meetings beginning in 1984 succeeded in developing a statement covering concerns of both sides; a formal agreement is soon to be worked out.

With an increasing interest in identifying native American place names in the United States, the experiences of Canada in preserving such names have generated exchanges of ideas between BGN and CPCGN. The CPCGN held a two-day symposium on the topic in 1986 that was attended by representatives of BGN.

Common goals of automation and gazetteer production have also resulted in several discussions. In 1985, the CPCGN hosted a meeting on automation of names that drew two participants from the US.

Both names authorities also have common interests in naming undersea features. To assure maximum conformity of procedures and to minimize accidental duplication of naming, regular correspondence between the respective advisory committees is carried out.

Even though the national authorities carry out many programs of mutual benefit, both countries have agreed to schedule at least one UNGEEN divisional meeting each year in the future.