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FIFTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
Montreal, 18-31 August 1987
Item 15 of the agenda

Draft report of the Conference

Chapter I: Organization of the Conference

Chapter II: Summary of the work of the Conference (Plenary)

Draft report of the Conference

CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

A. Terms of reference

1. The Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names was held at Montréal, Canada, from 18 to 31 August 1987. The Conference was held in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1983/120 of 26 May 1983.

B. Opening of the Conference

2. Dr. Jean-Paul Drolet, Chairman of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, made an introductory statement.

3. Opening the Conference, the Honourable Monique Landry, Minister for External Relations, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Canadian Government, and stressed the need for standardization of geographical names, outlining the important work done by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names. She thanked the Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization for having placed the Conference facilities at the disposal of the Canadian Government for the Conference.

4. Mr. N. Beredjick, Director, Natural Resources and Energy Division made a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General and of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. He thanked the Government of Canada for its generosity in extending the invitation to convene this Conference in Montréal. He thanked in particular Dr. Jean-Paul Drolet, Chairman of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and his colleagues for their diligent work.

5. The Executive Secretary of the Conference delivered a statement in which he retraced the activities of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development in the field of Standardization of Geographical Names since the last Conference.

C. Attendance

6. The Conference was attended by ___ representatives and observers of ___ countries, 1/ 1 specialized agency, 2/ and 3 intergovernmental and international scientific organizations. 3/ The list of participants appears as Annex I to the present report.

D. Adoption of the rules of procedure

7. At its first plenary meeting, the Conference adopted its rules of procedure (E/CONF.79/2), the text of which is reproduced in Annex II to the present report.

E. Adoption of the agenda

8. The Conference adopted its agenda as contained in document E/CONF.79/1, the text of which is reproduced in Annex III to the present report.

F. Election of officers

9. The Conference elected the following officers:

President: Mr. Jean-Paul DROLET (Canada)
1st Vice-President: Mr. Abdelhadi TAZI (Morocco)
2nd Vice-President: Mr. LI Ximu (China)
3rd Vice-President: Mr. D. José María GONZÁLES ABOÍN (Spain)
Rapporteur: Mr. Alan RAYBURN (Canada)
Editor-in-Chief: Mr. Allan ROSTVIK (Sweden)
Assistant Editors: Mr. Donald ORTH (United States of America)
Miss P. M. OPIE SMITH (United Kingdom)
Ms. Helen KERFOOT (Canada)

G. Organization of work

10. The Conference established three technical committees and the following officers were nominated and subsequently elected to the technical committees, each of which dealt with specific items of the agenda:

Committee I: National Programmes

Chairman: Mr. Jean RAMONDOU (France)
Vice-Chairman: Mr. Abdul Majid MOHAMED (Malaysia)
Rapporteur/Editor: Mr. Jean POIRIER (Canada)
National standardization (item 5)
Exonyms (item 9)
Writing systems and guides to pronunciation: research and experiments in assisting in name pronunciation (item 11)

Committee II: Technical Programmes

Chairman: Mr. H. A. G. LEWIS (United Kingdom)
Vice-Chairman: Mr. Rolf BÖHME (Federal Republic of Germany)
Rapporteur/Editor: Mr. Naftali KADMON (Israel)
Toponymic data files (item 6)
Terminology in the standardization of geographical names (item 7)

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Committee III: International Programmes

Chairman: Mr. Henri DORION (Canada)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Joseph BREU (Austria)

Rapporteur/Editor: Mr. Gerd QUINTING (United States of America) and
Mr. P. J. WOODMAN (United Kingdom)

Features beyond a single sovereignty (item 10)

Writing systems and guides to pronunciation (item 11)

Toponymic education and practice and international co-operation (item 12)

11. Items 1, 4, 8, 13, 14, 15 and 16 were reviewed in plenary meetings.

H. Documentation

12. A list of the documents submitted to the Conference appears as Annex IV to the present report.

I. Report on credentials

13. The Credentials Committee, composed of the President, the three Vice-Presidents, the Rapporteur, with the Executive Secretary ex officio, reported that the credentials of all representatives had been found in order.

J. Vote of thanks

- 14.

II. SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE (PLENARY)

Reports by divisions and Governments on the situation in their regions and countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (item 4)

15. The reports presented by the linguistic/geographical divisions revealed the continuing importance that these organizations are playing in stimulating and promoting the standardization of various aspects of names and naming practices in their respective regions. Such was especially indicated in the reports of the Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division, which had held two meetings since 1982; the Africa East Division; the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, which had held six regional meetings since the Fourth Conference; the Arabic Division; the Norden Division; the Romano-Hellenic Division; the East Central and South-Eastern Europe Division; the United Kingdom Division; and the United States of America-Canada Division. China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, in presenting divisional and national reports, gave extensive details on activities in their respective areas and on measures taken to implement the resolutions of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

16. Reports presented on behalf of countries revealed a number of advances in such areas as the development of toponymic guidelines, the production of gazetteers, the review of transboundary names and the dissemination of toponymic information. The resolutions of the four previous conferences were frequently noted when attention was drawn to particular aspects of national toponymic programmes. A highlight of the report by Canada was the introduction of an English version of "Méthodologie des inventaires toponymiques" ("A Manual for the Field Collection of Names"), published jointly by the Commission de toponymie du Québec and the Ministry of Natural Resources of Ontario. Also two Spanish versions have been produced by the Commission de toponymie du Québec. The report by the Republic of South Africa made special note of the preparation of gazetteers using automated methods and of the development of toponymic guidelines, and stated that special efforts were being made to assist neighbouring States in organizing national toponymic programmes. China's national report indicated considerable progress in the areas of field investigation, office treatment of names, gazetteer production and the development of laws and regulations relating to the management of geographical names. Extensive efforts have been made in China to correct names with misspellings, misapplications and inaccurate transliterations. In 1984 a national archives on geographical names was set up in China. Plans are under way in China to produce a 31-volume gazetteer with up to 100,000 names, with completion expected in 1991. The United Kingdom report drew attention to the production of a privately printed gazetteer based on names shown on Ordnance Survey maps, and made mention of the installation of a 640 kilobyte computer, a 28 megabyte disc drive and a dot matrix printer at the office of the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names. The report for Kenya made special mention of a country-wide project to update information on the names of administrative units and co-operation with the United Republic of Tanzania in standardizing names along their common border.

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_. The report for Austria noted that the geographical names on the current 1:50,000 series of maps were identical to those in the official gazetteer. A number of toponymic developments in France were mentioned. Among these was the creation in 1985 of a national council on geographical information (Conseil National de l'Information Géographique) in the Institut géographique national, with a mandate to co-ordinate toponymic programmes and to organize a number of studies on toponymic matters. The report by Ethiopia highlighted the collection of geographical names using a new recording system; many names differ from those previously gathered by the Italians and the Americans. Cuba's report noted various developments in the standardization of geographical names in that country. The report for Cyprus made note of the completion of a gazetteer, with 67,000 entries, based on automated data processing. Cyprus stated that it could not verify the geographical names in the Turkish Cypriot area under military occupation, and expressed regret that names in that area are being changed in contravention of international law and Resolution 16 of the Third United Nations Conference (1977). The representative of Turkey expressed displeasure at the report's lack of information on the Turkish names in Cyprus. He also commented on a Turkish Cypriot map of Cyprus at the scale of 1:250,000 on display in the exhibit area of the conference. The Federal Republic of Germany noted developments relating to automated data files, names lists and various publications, and stated that a systematic review of the implementation of resolutions had been undertaken. The report of the United States of America mentioned a variety of activities of the Board on Geographic Names and of several committees relating to domestic and foreign names, alphabetization, boundary names and undersea feature names. Special note was made of the six-week training course offered by the Board in Washington. A very active programme of name collection, office treatment and toponymic publishing was noted in the report by Finland. In the report by Israel a number of points were made relating to education, Romanization and automation. In matters concerning international co-operation, the representative for Israel stated that he would promote the development of national toponymic guidelines at the forthcoming meeting of the International Cartographic Association in Morelia, Mexico. The report of the German Democratic Republic noted items relating to the national and international standardization of names. The report of Chile drew attention to three organizations in that country involved in various aspects of name standardization for mapping purposes. A highlight of the report by Morocco was the reference to the co-operation by the five national universities in offering course material relating to name standardization. The report of Japan remarked on seven state agencies involved in the treatment of geographical names.

_. Poland touched on a number of developments in that country, with a new gazetteer containing 20,000 geographical names, a list of country names and terminology equivalents being among the highlights. Thailand reported on several aspects of name standardization, including Romanization, automated processing, gazetteer production and inter-regional co-operation. The report of Greece briefly mentioned some developments relating to mapping at the scale of 1:5,000, an automated names data base, to the Gazetteer of Greece and to the endorsement by the Greek Government of the ELOT 743 system for Romanization. Several significant developments have taken place in recent years in Yugoslavia, including the setting up of provincial names authorities in the Republics of Slovenia and Macedonia and the convening of a conference on the standardization of names and terminology in Sarajevo. Pakistan presented an extensive report on the field collection and office

treatment of names, and on other matters of names standardization. The report by Czechoslovakia touched on several matters relating to the standardization of names, with special reference to the publication of names lists, toponymic guidelines and a list of States of the world. Although the report for Bulgaria was not formally presented, a question was raised by Turkey about the treatment of accents in the alphabets of minority languages in that country. An extensive report by Iran touched on the field collection of names, the national gazetteer, changes in names, interregional activities, and the composition of the Asia South-West (other than Arabic) Division. The representative of Israel pointed out that his country was assigned to that division at the Second Conference in 1972, but further noted that the proposal to create a Hebrew Division would resolve the problem raised by Iran. Norway reported on a variety of developments relating to names standardization. A highlight of the report by the Republic of Korea was that new guidelines for the Romanization of Korean had been adopted in 1984. Indonesia gave a brief report, noting that the country is composed of some 17,000 islands, of which some 7,000 are uninhabited, with few of these having official names. It was also noted that the field collection and office treatment of names followed recommendations made at the training course held in Cisarua in 1982, but Indonesia had not as yet established a names authority. Turkey reported that it hopes that a gazetteer of 30,000 names will be published in the near future. Romania presented a report on progress in geographical name standardization in the country.

Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions
on the standardization of geographical names

___ . Australia raised a number of points concerning the difficulties of recognizing and cartographically portraying the names of physio-geographic regions. It was noted that such names must be widely used, and when discrepancies are resolved, information on the names and their precise application disseminated and monitored. It was also mentioned that none of the states in Australia was able at this time to pursue this subject.

___ . Canada stated that emphasis should be placed on measures to be taken to implement the resolutions. It stated further that increased efforts are needed to persuade all kinds of public and private agencies (e.g. schools, industries, transportation companies) to reduce exonyms, adding that the use of the local names of places should be reinforced outside their regions.

___ . It was recommended that in future, national reports should follow a similar structure and format. The Executive Secretary agreed to include a suitable outline for national reports in subsequent invitations.

___ . Morocco strongly recommended that each member State of the United Nations should be encouraged to establish a names authority.

Meetings and conferences

(a) United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

___ . The Netherlands introduced a resolution on the divisional structure of the Group of Experts, recommending the addition of the Celtic Division and the Hebrew Division.

_. The Netherlands presented a resolution on the revised statute of the Group of Experts, to which the Rules of Procedures formed section V.

Economic and social benefits of national and international
standardization of geographical names

_. Canada reported that a survey of the economic benefits of the Commission de toponymie du Québec had been undertaken by the Government of Quebec. It was concluded that if the functions and responsibilities of the Commission were distributed among the various departments of the Government that the costs of the same services and toponymic outputs would be doubled. Therefore, the Government reaffirmed the mandate and objectives of the Commission.

_. The United States of America noted that the dissemination of standardized names by toponymic authorities result in incalculable savings to Governments, private industry and the general public. Also noted were the tremendous savings in valuable resources and property when accurate names information and names data bases are available to fire-fighting and rescue teams, and similar disaster-control operations.

_. The United Kingdom emphasized the absolute necessity of accurate nomenclature on reliable maps when urgent matters such as famine relief and natural disaster recovery operations are undertaken. Related to this idea is the need to provide countries with economic aid in order to develop standardized nomenclature.

_. South Africa urged the establishment of links among national geographic names data bases as an important economic benefit.

_. Sweden noted the advantage of inter-agency co-operation on the automation of geographical names.

Notes

1/ Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, 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, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Malaysia, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, 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 (ICA), International Geographical Union (IGU), Organisation Islamique pour l'Education les Sciences et la Culture (ISESCO).
