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Fifth United Nations Conference  
on the Standardization of  
Geographical Names  
Montreal, 18-31 August 1987  
Item 1 of the provisional agenda\*

OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

Opening statement made by Dr. N. Beredjick, Director, Natural  
Resources and Energy Division, Department of Technical  
Co-operation for Development - United Nations

Paper submitted by the Secretariat

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OPENING STATEMENT MADE BY DR. N. BEREDJICK, DIRECTOR, NATURAL  
RESOURCES AND ENERGY DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF TECHNICAL  
CO-OPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT - UNITED NATIONS

The Honourable Minister of External Relations, Dr. Jean-Paul Drolet, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, it is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

First of all, I have the most pleasant duty to thank the Government of Canada for its generosity in extending the invitation to convene this Conference in Montreal and for offering these outstanding facilities here at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization. I want to thank in particular, Dr. Jean-Paul Drolet, Chairman of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and his co-ordinating committee for all the diligent work the Committee has done to make our stay here most comfortable and a fruitful one.

We are also particularly pleased to note the great response from the various Governments and I wish to thank all delegates and observer organizations who have invested considerable time and effort to contribute to the success of this Conference.

It was 20 years ago, almost to the day, that the Economic and Social Council convened in Geneva the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. This Fifth Conference is another significant event in the field of cartography in general and in the standardization of geographical names in particular which are both presently playing an increasingly pivotal role in the economic and social development of developing countries.

The holding of this Fifth Conference in Canada could not have been more appropriate as it coincides with the ninetieth anniversary of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Commission de Toponymie du Quebec, and we wish to congratulate both organizations for their achievements.

The present Conference agenda is a great challenge for each one of you and I am confident that the impressive number of technical reports contributed to the various items of this agenda will enable you to conduct fruitful discussion giving rise to concrete and practical results in this most important area for development.

I will not enumerate the many achievements reached during these 20 years but I sincerely believe that fundamental issues such as national standardization, toponymic guidelines, training and terminology,, just to name a few, have made significant progress because of your successful efforts. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding work performed by the members of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names who must be credited for the great role they have played in the formulation and the implementation of various conference resolutions.

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I believe that the efforts of this Conference could focus, inter alia, on the application of automation towards the economic production of gazetteers and creation of computerized toponymic data files; this Conference could also stress again the utmost importance of national standardization as a prerequisite to any international standardization and, of course, what better way to achieve this than by promoting courses in toponymy and related training exercises.

The economic and social benefits that a country can derive from the creation or the strengthening of a national names authority are well known, and countries requiring assistance in either the establishment or the updating of such a service are encouraged to seek such assistance from the United Nations. Our Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and its Cartography Unit can provide advisory services and technical co-operation assistance in the formulation and implementation of such projects, and my colleague Dr. de Henseler, who is the Chief of our Cartography Unit and I will be very pleased to discuss this matter further with any delegation.

Last but not least let me express the hope that your deliberations may be fruitful and also that in spite of your heavy load of work you may be able to enjoy some of the technical visits and tours which have been organized by our generous host.

May I reiterate our deep appreciation for all the facilities and hospitality made available to us and may I conclude by conveying to the Canadian authorities, on your behalf, our gratitude for their hospitality and for making it possible to meet in the beautiful city of Montreal.

I am pleased to declare open the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

Thank you.

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