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FIFTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
Montreal, 18-31 August 1987
Item 4 of the 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 Africa East Division

Paper submitted by Africa East Division, United
Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names *

* Prepared by A.K. Njuki, Chairman of the Division

FIFTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES, MONTREAL, CANADA
18TH - 31ST AUGUST 1987

AGENDA ITEM 4 - REPORT BY AFRICA EAST DIVISION

Presented By A.K. Njuki of the Republic of Kenya,
Chairman of the Division

The Division was unrepresented at the Fourth United Nations Conference held in Geneva on 24th August to 14th September 1982 due to circumstances beyond the control of the Chairman and other members of the Division."

Although the Division has not held any meetings since the 4th United Nations Conference, activities in the field of standardization of geographical names continue at various levels in each member country of the Division. Correspondences from member countries of the Division reveal the following activities in the member countries:-

(1) The Republic of Botswana

The Place Names Commission was established by a Presidential Directive (CAB 51/67) dated 11th October 1967 and the Surveyor General was appointed the Chairman of the Commission. By July 1981 the Commission had held seventy seven formal meetings at which over 2500 names were discussed. By December 1970 the Commission had met twenty six times and discussed 1043 names. In July 1981 the Commission published a second list of Names and Recommended Spellings. The list may be obtained from the Chairman, Place Names Commission, c/o Department of Surveys and Lands, Private Bag 0037, GABERONE, Republic of Botswana.

(2) The Government of Socialist Ethiopia

The situation of the standardization of geographical names in Ethiopia will be adequately covered by Mr. Yosef, when giving his country's national report to this conference.

(3) The Republic of Kenya

The activities of standardization of geographical names has continued in the Republic. All the new names which have been collected during the up-

dating of topographical maps have been processed by the standing committee on geographical names and included in the printed maps. It is estimated that approximately 9000 place names on 250 maps sheets have been dealt with by the standing committee on Geographical Names since the last conference. A revision copy of the gazetteer and a card index for new and amended names continue to be maintained for the purpose of publishing the third edition of the gazetteer. During the period under review, a small gazetteer, has been compiled for the 4th Edition of the National atlas and contains approximately 2,000 place names which appear in the atlas. The standing committee on standardization of Geographical Names is presently involved with the preparation of Toponymic Guidelines for Map and other Editors and we expect to publish the first edition by the end of 1987.

(4) The Republic of Malawi

Malawi has not as yet set up any National committee on the standardizing of Geographical Names hence the exercise on the standardizing names has not been embarked upon. The lack of access to some of the original documentation and resolutions at previous or rather founding conferences and subsequent seminars or symposia may have resulted in the stagnation of the exercise. Obviously there has been to date very little interest that the onomastic sciences locally have shown in the exercise. This apparent deliberate apathy may be a result of the enormity of the task coupled with the financial limitations. The Commissioner of Surveys is hopeful that he will sensitise his Government to view the formation of a National Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names favourably.

(5) The Peoples Republic of Mozambique

The Republic is experiencing some problems with names along their borders where the neighbouring countries do not recognize their official version of the names and instead adopt their own. It is intended to publish a coded booklet in alphabetical order listing all the names in their national atlas which would be revised from time to time. If the list will be too

voluminous then a computer assisted system may be employed. The Republic is very keen on international standardization and hoped that some day standardized Geographical Names, symbols, conventions and letters will be published for Eastern Africa in particular and Africa in general. They have also shown great interest in short training courses on toponymy and hope that they will be invited to participate.

(6) Swaziland Government

Swaziland has a Place Names Committee, but it has not met for some years. The chairman of the committee is Mr. J.S.M. Matsebula, the well known historian of Swaziland. He is the Executive Secretary of the Swaziland National Trust Commission, a quasi-government body which is part of the Ministry of National Resources, Land Utilization and Energy. It seems likely that the Place Names Committee has been dormant for some time as there has been no pressure to compile a list of place names.

The Surveyor General's office plans to reconstruct the thirty one sheets of 1/50,000 scale mapping. The names on these maps were compiled in the early 1950's by the British Directorate of Colonial Surveys. The Surveyor General has no information as to the sources of these names. They are very obviously incomplete. They are now out of date and do not conform to modern spelling. However they have continued in use with only minor changes though the various editions of the map series, until the present time. The major overhaul proposed for the map series would be an ideal opportunity to complete and correct the place names. Thus it is hoped that the Swaziland Place Names Committee will be revived, that the record of its previous meetings can be made available, and that an accurate list of place names in Swaziland can be compiled. Possibly this list could also include translations of the Siswati names and the source of names of European or other origin.

(7) United Republic of Tanzania

Since the 4th Conference at Geneva in 1982, the Surveys and Mapping Division, of the Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Tourism, has managed to put through Parliament an act for the establishment of a National Geographical

Names standardization committee, Act No. 23 of 1982. The committee was formally established with 18 members effective 13th June 1983 and for a term of three years which has now run out. In general, various recommendations of this first committee are still under consideration. The second committee is being formed to continue with the tasks left uncompleted by the first one. A full report on the first committee is still to be published. Until then, it is not possible to provide the full details of its activities so far performed.

(8) The Republic of Uganda

Regretably, since the last conference in Athens in 1977, Uganda has been passing through a difficult political era which has not been conducive to undertaking any constructive mapping programme. However, it is hoped that in the near future the District Standing Committees on standardization of Geographical names will be revitalised as the Department of Surveys and Mapping launches new mapping programmes.

(9) The Republic of Zambia

Zambia has not done much in the area of the standardization of Geographical Names, but the government appointed a standing committee in 1978 whose terms of reference were to advise the government on matters relating to geographical nomenclature in Zambia. This committee is composed of Surveyors, geographers, cartographers, historians, linguistic and administrators.

Ever since the committee was appointed, much of its work has been confined to the revision of the National Gazetteer of Geographical Names which was lastly published in 1966. In addition to this revision, the committee is working towards the direction of re-organizing the local sub-committee at both provincial and district levels in order to effectively formulate the policies of the standardization of names in the country. But it is regretably observed that the committee's work is being retarded due to lack of enthusiasm on the part of the appropriate authority towards its effectiveness. However, efforts are being made by the Surveys Department

to re-organize the committee and stimulate to the higher authority the importance of standardizing geographical place names in the country. According to the standing committee's plans, it is to increase the names from the present 35,000 contained in the 1966 Edition to about 45,000 names.

(10) The Republic of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has a Geographical Names Standing Committee (GNSC) of which the Surveyor-General is the Chairman. The activities of GNSC can be illustrated from the extracts of the Surveyor-General's annual report for 1986, in which he stated:-

"The Geographical Names Standing Committee had 2 meetings during the year. One was a special meeting held just 3 days after the regular GNSC meeting to check names submitted by the Cabinet Committee of Place Names (CCPN).

Spellings of 1339 names were checked on the preparatory lists and for the CCPN. Of these, 1217 were verified as 122 referred back to District Administration and GNSC for more information on meaning of place names".

Zimbabwe has not in any way been associated with the last conferences. However, they recently received an invitation circular from the United Nations to attend this conference and that was the first time they heard of the United Nations conference on the standardization of Geographical Names.

(11) Other Member Countries of the Division

No information has been received from other member countries of the Division, namely, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles, but it is expected that activities in the field of standardization of geographical names is still continuing.

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