

Sixth Session

New York, 5-26 March, 1975

Training Course in Toponymy

With reference to the Draft Report of the Fifth Session of the U.N. Group of Experts on Geographical Names, 5-16 March, 1973, page 6, par. Training Courses, Dr. Blok and Dr. Ormeling, authorised by the U.N. Working Group on Training Courses, to carry out exploratory work sound the possibilities of a Training Course in the Netherlands have pleasure in reporting the following.

1. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided in November 1974 in principle to grant financial support to the planned Training Course in Toponymy to be held at the International Institute for Aerial Survey and Earth Sciences (ITC), Enschede, Netherlands in the autumn 1975 or in the beginning of 1976.
2. This decision means that the Netherlands Government is willing to finance the travel and accommodation of 25-30 students from developing countries to participate in this course as was envisaged in Working Paper No. 24 which was presented to the above mentioned Fifth Session of the Group of Experts.
3. The travel and accommodation costs of the international lecturers to be recruited as planned in March 1973, from the U.N. Group of Experts must be covered by other bodies.
3. Preliminary to its final decision to support the Training Course the Netherlands Government recommends the following points to be considered by the Working Group on Training Courses

3.1 Selection of participating countries

It is recommended that the number of countries participating in the First Training Course on Toponymy be limited to 5-7, with 2-4 persons from each country, if possible. This is to stimulate discussion and ensure the mutual consolation of participants during the course.

In order to conform with its policy for development aid the Netherlands Government recommends further concentrating upon the English speaking countries in Africa such as Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia together with the Asian countries Sri Lanka and Bangla Desh to which Laos possibly could be added. It is assumed that, in these countries, the shortage of trained personnel, the urgency of the domestic geographical names problem and the possibilities of implementation and follow-up are closely related and comparable.

3.2 Selection of Students

The Netherlands Government recommends seeking students whose educational standards and experience correspond with the level of the course. Further, guarantees should be sought that the activities on returning home on completion of the course will benefit from the participant having followed the course. Finally an effort should be made to ensure that no employees who have no functional ties with or experience in the collection or processing of geographical names register for the course.

3.3 Follow-up

The Netherlands Government urgently stresses the fact that follow-up courses should be hosted by other countries or linguistic/geographical divisions, as envisaged during the Fifth Session of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names in 1973. It welcomes the intentions of Canada and of the Norden (Scandinavian) countries to host a second and a third follow-up course as announced during the Fifth Session. Finally, the Netherlands Government expresses the hope that this initiative eventually may lead to the establishment of a toponymical training centre of a permanent nature in one of the developing countries.

3.4 Assessment of the Interest

To ensure the success of the Training Course the Netherlands Government recommends to the U.N. Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy and to the Dutch organisation committee that they investigate by means of a circular whether or not the National Mapping Agencies in the countries listed in par. 3.1 are willing to give true priority to the geographical names problem, and to participate in the Training Course. The Dutch Government requests to be informed about the results of this sounding in order that they can instruct the Netherlands Diplomatic Representatives to inform the respective authorities in the participating countries; in this way the best possible success of the Training Course can be ensured.

Rapporteurs Blok and Ormeling suggest to use the above recommendations as a basis for discussion during the forthcoming Sixth Session of the Group of Experts in New York in March 1975

It seems that the long-awaited idea of a Training Course in Toponymy is within reach.

Blok/Ormeling