SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda*

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES:

Work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Submitted by the United States of America **/

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**/ Prepared by Dr. Richard R. Randall, Executive Secretary, U.S. Board on Geographic Names
WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Since the Fifth Conference in 1987, the United Nations Group of
Experts has continued to work diligently and effectively. With
meetings in 1989 and 1991, and with a session immediately after
the 5th Conference, the UNGEGN has carried out numerous
assignments. This paper comments on a major task created by
Resolution 4, "Work Performed by the United Nations Group of
Experts on Geographical Names and its Future Activities." The
author of this paper agreed to serve as convenor or a UNGEGN
Working Group on Evaluation.

Reports submitted to the UNGEGN sessions in 1989 and 1991 provided
results of programs the Working Group identified. These reports
are available in UN files. In addition, the convenor has prepared
a report for the 16th UNGEGN on the general topic. It identifies
various actions and recommends their implementation by the 6th
Conference.

Apart from those recommendations, the convenor calls attention to
the active participation of members of the Working Group and
others interested in its mission. There is little question that
individuals seriously concerned with geographic names at the
national and international levels agree our work can be improved.
The numerous conference resolutions indicate a need to control
future statements so they address realistic and practical
programs. Another theme is to increase training programs so
nations lacking names authorities may learn principles, policies,
and procedures of standardization. A further topic is to increase
contacts with national cartographic agencies in order to gain
their support of names programs. Lacking a close tie with
cartography, names programs may not succeed. Another program is
to increase our "public relations" image by writing articles for
the news media and for technical and professional societies. In
some areas, UN instrumentalities should play a greater role.

We should recognize that our major goal remains unchanged: to
encourage the formation of national authorities. Many have
referred to Resolution 4 of the 1st UN Conference in 1967 as
having defined national and international goals with clarity and
deepth unexcelled since then. We should strive to implement its
recommendations to the fullest. Meantime, we should avoid
programs of an onomastic or theoretical nature which require too
great an investment of time and resource. While our mission is
receiving due credit, we need to refocus our work on the tasks
facing us. Not to do so will jeopardize our credibility.