

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES ON THE WORK OF ITS SEVENTH SESSION

(held at Athens Chandris Hotel, Athens, Greece on  
16 August and 8 September 1977)

Terms of reference

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was invited by the Secretary-General in pursuance to Economic and Social Council resolution 314 (XLIV) to convene its Seventh Session at Athens Chandris Hotel, Athens, Greece, on 16 August 1977, prior to the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and to meet again on 8 September 1977 to review the results of the Conference.

Attendance

2. The Session was attended by 39 experts from 30 countries representing all of the 17 geographical/linguistic divisions of the world.<sup>1)</sup>

3. Mr. C.N. Christopher, Chief of the Cartography Section, served in the capacity of secretary for the Group.

Opening of the session

4. The Session was opened by the Chairman of the Group of Experts, Mr. M.F. Burrill (U.S.A.).

5. The Group agreed to follow the same rules of procedure as in the previous sessions.

6. The Group adopted the following agenda:

1. Reports of the Working Groups
2. Organization of the Third Conference
3. Election of officers
4. Review of Conference recommendations
5. Program for the Group of Experts
6. Eighth session of the Group of Experts
7. Other Business

7. In its meeting of 16 August the Group considered the reports of the seven working groups which were to be presented before the Conference.

<sup>1)</sup> See Annex

### Reports of the Working Groups

8. The reports of the Working Groups as annexed to the report of the Sixth Session of the Group of Experts<sup>2)</sup> were adopted as the basis for discussion during the Third Conference. It was agreed that the reports would be presented to the Conference by the convenors of the working groups, or, in their absence, by the rapporteurs. Col. D.N.Sharma Atri Harnal agreed to present the report of the Working Group on Definitions and Mr. J.R. Ramondou that of the Working Group on Country Names.

### Organization of the Conference

9. It was announced that Mr. L. Mavridis (Greece) would be nominated president of the Conference. It was also proposed to establish an editorial committee, the chairman of which would also be appointed an officer of the Conference.

10. As has been done during the First and Second Conferences it was agreed to form five committees. The items for discussion had been assigned to the committees by the Sixth Session of the Group. All delegates to the Third Conference would be invited to participate in the work of each committee.

11. For the nomination of the officers of the Third Conference, the technical committees and the editorial group a nominating committee was established consisting of Col. D.N. Sharma Atri Harnal as chairman and Mr. M.F. Burrill, Mr. P. Foo, Mr.E.Meynen and Mr. C.N. Christopher as members.

### Election of officers

12. On 8 September the Seventh Session was reconvened. It was agreed to elect a new slate of officers, and the following were chosen:

Chairman, Mr. J. Breu (Austria); Vice-Chairman, Mr. W.J. Absaloms (Kenya); Rapporteur, Mr. A.Rayburn (Canada). A proposal to elect a second Vice-Chairman was withdrawn after discussion revealed that there would be no real need for such an officer.

13. Mr. M.F. Burrill commended Mr. D.P. Blok for his work since 1967 in performing the duties of rapporteur of the Group of Experts and of the Second and Third Conferences. Mr. J. Breu after having taken over the chair praised Mr. M.F. Burrill and Mr. A.M. Komkov, who had served as chairman and vice-chairman since 1967, for their achievements in furthering the objectives of the United Nations in the area of standardization of geographical names.

<sup>2)</sup> Document ESA/RT/C/GN/4, 17 June 1975, Annex I-VII; pp.10-30.

## Review of Conference recommendations

14. The Chairman pointed out that the progress of the Conference is shown especially by its recommendations. Whereas some of them signify final results as for example many of the recommendations on romanization, many others assign specific tasks to the Group of Experts as a whole or to its working groups.

### Program for the Group of Experts

15. The Chairman suggested the following program: Each working group will carry on its work with special regard to the results of the Conference. The Convener of each working group will direct the work by means of circulars, distributed to all members of the group. The contributions of the members of the groups will also be distributed by them to all other members by circular letters. The Chairman himself will send circulars to all members of the Group of Experts and ask them to submit copies of their correspondence with the convener of the working groups to him. He thinks that only in this way can that progress of work be achieved which is necessary to make the Eighth Meeting a success.

### Working Groups

16. The Chairman enumerated the resolutions of the Conference referring those covering special topics to the working groups concerned. It was emphasized that the task given to the working groups should be expressed explicitly with specific goals in mind, and that the groups should be disbanded upon completion of the assigned tasks.

### Working Group on Definitions

17. It was agreed that the work of the Working Group on Definitions remained incomplete. It was also noted that the Division of Languages of the United Nations in New York and the Terminology Commission in Geneva were very interested in the definitions prepared by the working group. Since there was a need to prepare a revised version of the Spanish language section of the definitions it was agreed that Mr. J.M. Gonzalez Aboin (Spain) would act as the co-ordinator of a sub-group to carry out this task.

### Working Group on Undersea and Maritime Features

18. Mr. R.R. Randall (U.S.A.) observed that there was a need to continue the work of this group in cooperation with the International Hydrographic Organization. Greece informed Mr. R.R. Randall that it wished to appoint a person to serve on the working group.

Working Group on Extraterrestrial Topographical Features

19. Mr. A.M. Komkov (U.S.S.R.) stated that considerable work remains to be done in consultation with the International Astronomical Union. The new membership of the group is to include Mr. A.M. Komkov (U.S.S.R.), Mr. H.A.G. Lewis (U.K.), Col. D.N. Sharma Atri Harnal (India), Mr. S. Radó (Hungary), Mr. R.R. Randall (U.S.A.) and Mr. D. Vayacacos (Greece).

Working Group on a Single Romanization System for Each Non-Roman Writing System

20. Mr. E. Földi (Hungary) was appointed to succeed Mr. J. Breu as the convenor. New assignments as well as reappointments were made for the following alphabets and scripts:

Arabic in the Maghreb area - Mr. A. Tazi; Amharic, Hebrew, Khmer, Korean in South Korea, Laotian, Persian, Thai - Mr. P.G.M. Geelan; Greek - Mr. D. Vayacacos; Chinese - Mr. Qiao Feng; Bhutanese - Col. D.N. Sharma Atri Harnal; Japanese - Mr. T. Kanakubo and Mr. P.G.M. Geelan. Since Somalia has adopted a Roman alphabet work is no longer required on Somali. It was pointed out that many countries fail to respond to requests for information on progress in romanizing their alphabets and scripts.

Working Group on Training Courses

21. It was reported that Mr. F.J. Ormeling was still pursuing the possibility of holding a training course in the Netherlands. Note was made of the various other proposals for training suggested during the Third Conference. The following were nominated to serve with Mr. F.J. Ormeling: Mr. P. Foo (Malaysia), Mr. J.L. Sawyerr (Liberia) and Mr. A. Rayburn (Canada).

Working Group on Gazetteers

22. Mr. H.A.G. Lewis (U.K.) agreed to continue as the convenor of this group. Mr. J.L. Sawyerr (Liberia) offered to assist with the work of the group. It was felt that automatic data processing should be treated outside the frame of the group.

Working Group on Automated Data Processing

23. It was agreed to establish a separate working group on automated data processing with Mr. R. Böhme (F.R.G.) as the convenor, Mr. P. Foo (Malaysia), Mr. J.M. Gonzalez Aboin (Spain), Mr. T. Kanakubo (Japan), Mr. A.M. Komkov (U.S.S.R.), Mr. H.A.G. Lewis (U.K.), Mr. C.M. Mubita (Zambia), Mr. D.J. Orth (U.S.A.), Mr. R.R. Randall (U.S.A.), Mr. A. Rayburn (Canada) and Mr. I. Valazquez Garcia (Cuba). It was emphasized that the tasks and objectives of the working group must be clearly defined.

Working Group on the List of Country Names

24. Mr. J. Ramondou (France) accepted the duties of convenor for this group. He pointed out that considerable work remains to be done as regards the Russian and Chinese names. Mr. F. Gall noted that a list of country names in Spanish had been submitted to Mr. J. Ramondou.

Other Business

25. It was noted that responsibility for the study of the reduction of exonyms rests with the Group of Experts as a committee of the whole.

26. Mr. R.O. Coker (Nigeria) observed that some resolutions are not acted upon, such as no. 34 of the Second Conference and that action must be taken to reduce areas of friction.

27. The Chairman said that he would examine the resolutions of the Third Conference and request the convenors to proceed with the tasks of their working groups. He also proposed the compilation of a questionnaire for submission to countries to assess their problems and solutions in the handling of languages.

28. Mr. M.F. Burrill proposed that, when countries or divisions achieve results in the standardizing of names or in resolving problems relating to nomenclature, they communicate such information to Mr. C.N. Christopher.

29. It was reported that meetings of Africa East, India and Romano - Hellenic Divisions were held during the previous two weeks, and that Africa East and Africa West Divisions had held a joint meeting. It was noted that the First Latin American Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names was scheduled to be held in Suriname during November 1978. It was further noted that the Fifth Central American Meeting on the Standardization of Geographical Names was scheduled in El Salvador for the second part of 1978 and that the Second South American Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names was planned for the first part of 1979.

30. In implementation of resolution 26 of the third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names on the African Geographic/Linguistic Divisions which called for the establishment of a new Division entitled "Africa Central", upon the recommendation of Mr. W.L. Absaloms (Kenya) and Mr. R.O. Coker (Nigeria), Mr. M. Bizenga (Congo) was elected as Division Chairman of this new Division.

31. The eighth session of the Group of Experts will be held in New York, 5-16 March 1979. A provisional agenda will be prepared in the spring of 1978 and this along with invitations to designate experts will be submitted to the governments of the member countries of the United Nations.

A n n e x

List of Participants

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