



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.91/CRP.14
12 January 1998

ENGLISH ONLY

SEVENTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 13-22 January 1998
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR
REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE
SIXTH CONFERENCE

Report by the Dutch-and German-speakers Division (DGSD)

Paper submitted by the United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names (UNGEKN)**

* E/CONF.91/1

** Prepared by Mr. Jorn Sievers, Chairman of the Division

Report of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division

Membership and participation

1. In the period 1992-1997 experts from the following countries were members of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD):

Austria

Belgium

Germany

The Netherlands

South Africa

Suriname

Switzerland

2. According to the statutes of the DGSD, South Africa took over the chair in 1992. At a meeting of the DGSD held on the occasion of the 17th UNGEGN Session in New York in 1994, the Chairman, Dr. Raper, explained that he had recently retired from his position at the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria but would continue as chairman of UNGEGN and of the Africa South Division. Therefore, he would like to step down as chairman of the DGSD. According to the statutes of the DGSD, the representative from Germany, Dr. Sievers, took over the chairmanship.

3. An expert from Suriname, apparently because of lack of funds and time, was not able to participate in the Division meetings. He was informed by correspondence. There is also a continuing effort regarding the representation of the German language group in Southern Tyrol by an expert in the DGSD.

Meetings

4. The Division held five meetings since the Sixth United Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in New York in 1992:

24 August and 2 September 1992, New York

3 May 1993, Köln, Germany

14, 16 and 22 June 1994, New York

13 August 1996, Geneva, Switzerland

9 October 1996, Wien, Austria

5. Each meeting was attended by four to eight experts. The agendas included usually the following items: 'Toponymic guidelines', 'glossary of toponymic terminology', 'training courses in applied toponymy', 'list of exonyms', 'list of contry names' as well as short reports on the activities in the countries of the participants.

Symposium on Geographical Names

6. On the occasion of the 100th meeting of the Ständiger Ausschluß für geographische Namen (StAGN, permanent committee on geographical names) and of the Millennium of Austria, an international "Symposium on Geographical Names" was held in Wien on 10 October 1996. The symposium was organized by StAGN and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde (AKO, Board on Geographical Names). The venue was at the Bundesamt für Eich- und Vermessungswesen (Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying). The following papers were given:

J. Sievers (DE): Tasks of the Ständiger Ausschluß für geographische Namen (StAGN);

H. Desoye (AT): Tasks of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde (AKO);

J. Breu (AT): The importance of geographical names and their standardization at national and international levels;

F. Ormeling (NL): The importance of the standardization of geographical names for developing countries;

J. Sievers (DE): Standardization of geographical names in the Antarctic;

E. Spiess (CH): Standardization of geographical names in multilingual areas;

I. Hausner (AT): Dialects and historic-linguistical aspects of the standardization of names;

O. Back (AT): Problems with the transcription of geographical names;

A. Hanle (DE): Toponymic editing of maps, exonyms and changes of names;

P. Jordan (AT): Toponymic editing of maps by example of the "Atlas of Eastern and Southeastern Europe";

H. Meckel (AT): Toponymic data bases.

7. The symposium was attended by 81 participants from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Ukraine. The papers were published as Volume 10 "Kartographie und Namenstandardisierung" of the series "Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie" in 1997.

Participation and functions at UNGEGN Sessions

8. Experts of the DGSD attended the two UNGEGN Sessions held in 1994 (New York) and in 1996 (Geneva) in considerable number and collaborated actively in various Working Groups. In 1992, the South African representative to the DGSD, Dr. Raper, was re-elected as Chairman of the UNGEGN for a further period of five years. The representative of the Netherlands, Prof. Ormeling, was assigned the convenorship of the UNGEGN Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy. The German representative, Dr. Sievers, was elected as UNGEGN Liaison Officer to the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR).

Toponymic guidelines

9. During a DGSD meeting held in Geneva in 1996, it was considered to publish existing toponymic guidelines on behalf of the UNGEGN by a private publisher. The status in the DGSD member countries is as follows: Toponymic guidelines for Austria were issued in 1982 as a 1st edition. Several updates were submitted to the UNGEGN, the last one in 1994. A completely revised version was drafted in 1997 and sent to the UNGEGN Chairman. Guidelines for Flanders, the Flemish speaking part of Belgium, had already been drafted and approved. They were presented at the 18th UNGEGN Session in Geneva in 1996. The 3rd edition of the toponymic guidelines for Germany have been drafted and will be presented at the 7th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in New York. After having published guidelines for South Africa as a 3rd edition in 1991, these guidelines required revision due to the political changes in South Africa. There are now 11 official languages, instead of 2 hitherto. Toponymic guidelines for Suriname were presented at the UN Cartographic Conference in 1985. The revision of the guidelines for Switzerland, published as a 1st edition in 1982, is in progress.

Glossary of toponymic terminology

10. The "German Glossary of Toponymic Terminology" was published by the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN) as a joint project of Austria, Germany and Switzerland in 1995. The publication is based on the English Version 2.0 (1993) as approved by the UNGEGN Working Group on Terminology in 1994. The German glossary was presented at the 18th UNGEGN Session in Geneva in 1996. It will be made available on the Internet.

List of exonyms

11. A list of exonyms in the Dutch language had been prepared by a Belgian-Dutch ad-hoc commission on foreign geographical names and published in 1996. It will be presented at the 7th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in New York. Austria, Germany and Switzerland had worked on a list of selected exonyms in the German language and published it in 1993. It was presented at the 17th UNGEGN Session in New York in 1994. A revision of this list as a 2nd edition is in preparation. It will be made available on the Internet.

List of country names

12. A synoptical list of country names as officially used in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, is being compiled continuously by StAGN and published at irregular intervals. It was issued as a 5th edition in 1997, now also containing as an annex a list of selected dependent territories. This list is already available on the Internet (see Working Paper E/CONF.91/L.30 of this Conference). The Belgian-Dutch ad-hoc commission on foreign geographical names had published a list of country names in the Dutch language in 1993.

Training courses on applied toponymy

13. Experts from the Netherlands had contributed to an UN toponymy course held in Pretoria in 1993 and had assisted UNGEGN divisions (Asia Southeast and Pacific) in the planning of such courses. Prof. Ormeling is Chairman of the UNGEGN Working Group on training courses in applied toponymy. In this capacity he gave a lecture on the importance of the standardization of geographical names for developing countries at the "Symposium on Geographical Names" held in Vienna in 1996. Further he was invited to the 100th meeting of the Standiger Ausschluß für geographische Namen (StAGN) to inform the StAGN members of the importance of this UNGEGN agenda item with the scope of motivating Austrian, German and Swiss colleagues to a more active participation in such training courses.