

Eighth Session of the
United Nations Group of
Experts on Geographical Names

Working Paper No. 6

New York, 26 February-9 March 1979
Agenda items No. 6 and 9

WORKING PAPER SUBMITTED BY J.B. WEKKER (SURINAME)

1. It was noted in the Report of the 7th session of the U.N.G.E.G.N. held in Athens Aug. 16th to September 8th, 1977, (under "Other Business, point 29") that the First Latin American Conference of the Standardization of Geographical Names was to be held in Suriname during November 1978. Circumstances beyond the control of our organizing committee have forced this conference to be postponed indefinitely.

We would like to call the attention of the Group of Experts to this matter, particularly since the papers (Constitutional Articles) stating the "aims, functions and modus operandi" of the U.N. Group of Experts on Geographical Names give no directives on the subject.

We hope, by some discussion of the matter, to prevent a repetition of this unhappy incident.

The United Nations Expert for Latin America took the view, in a letter dated May 3, 1978 (of which the Chairman of the Group of Experts, Dr. J. Breu, has received a copy from us), that "the activity falls entirely within the Division of Latin America of which he still is the President" - a statement from which one must draw the conclusion that he is the one and only authority in this matter.

This opinion, which, to us, seems not in accordance with the spirit of Resolution 1314 (XLIV) of the Economic and Social Council, stating, among other things, that the Group of Experts will encourage and support meetings to be held within each of the divisions, greatly embarrassed our organization in Suriname.

The Surinamese Government had allotted funds for the Conference, announcements had been sent to expected participants, agreements with interpreters had been entered into, hotels

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reserved, printings done and even a collaborator sent to New York to be trained as a conference officer.

Because the U.N. Expert for Latin America did not agree with the fixed date of the Paramaribo Conference, everything had to be cancelled.

Although we hold this Expert in highest esteem because of his qualities and capacities, we can not condone a national organization's loss of credibility, because of such an attitude.

It must be possible to prevent such a situation as described above, by establishing an appeals institution which can make decisions, (take over, or delegate the authority of the U.N. Expert).

Truly, a self-respecting national organization will, after such an experience, only be willing to host a conference if sufficient guarantees against recurrences can be given.

2. Activities by the Surinamese Cartographic Committee after Athens 1977.

a. By a decree dated January 13th, 1978, the Government of the Republic of Suriname has decided that the official name of Suriname shall be spelled as "SURINAME" in all languages using the Latin alphabet.

The Government Representative of the Republic of Suriname to the United Nations has requested the Secretary-General that above-mentioned decision be given the widest possible dissemination.

b. Discussions are well underway regarding:

1. the reduction of some exonyms e.g.

"Argentina" instead of "Argentinië"

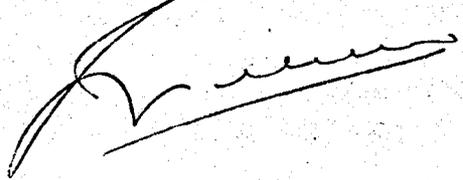
"Brasil" instead of "Brazilië"

"Chile" instead of "Chili".

2. The compilation of the National Atlas of Suriname, introducing at the same time some standardization of geographical names.

- c. The work on the gazetteer of Geographical Names appearing on the maps 1:100.000 and 1:200.000 of the Centraal Bureau of Aerial Surveying is progressing.

President Cartographic Committee,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J.B. Wekker', written over a horizontal line.

(J.B. WEKKER).