

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

New York, 26 February - 9 March 1979

Address of the Chairman of UNGEGN
at its closing session on 9 March 1979

Dear Colleagues,

We have come to an end with our work for this session.

When we started some pessimism was expressed as only a few working papers had arrived, and it was to be feared that all could end in a more or less sterile routine work.

Now, when going home, we can take with us a certain feeling of optimism. Two Working Groups have practically finished their work, the Working Group on Definitions and on Country Names, and the new Working Group on Automated Data Processing has taken a very good start.

But most encouraging was the lively interest and the strong participation of the newcomers. And here I see an important task for the future. We ought to encourage all countries of the world to take part in the activities of names standardization within the framework of the United Nations.

We shall come home burdened with 56 Working Papers containing a large amount of information, of projects and plans for further work and for better co-operation. The Working Groups will continue their work. But I should like to remind you that in the period between this session and the next one our main activity should be done within the divisions. They constitute the framework, in which national standardization can best be furthered and propagated.

And I believe that the most important part of our work is national standardization as the basis for international standardization.

The excellent recommendation No 4 of Geneva should be the starting point for every activity in this field.

A very positive aspect for the future are the training courses on names standardization which will be effectuated thanks to the activities of the convenor of the respective Working Group. Great responsibility rests also with the Working Group on Romanization. Its convenor has stated, that the majority of experts adhere to the donor principle. But this does not mean that we only have to wait what happens and accept what we receive. Our task is to continue giving advice to those countries which are working on national standards and to inform them again and again that a romanization system is of little value for us if it is not widely applied in the country itself, especially on maps and in gazetteers.

The Working Group on Gazetteers has initiated work on a shorter edition of the planned concise United Nations Gazetteer of the World which will not only stimulate national names standardization but also further international information exchange.

The Working Groups on Extraterrestrial Futures and on Undersea and Maritime Features have given us outstanding examples of interdisciplinary co-operation with other international agencies.

Before closing our session we have to thank all institutions and individuals that have helped us in our work.

Without the spirited activity of the Secretary of the Group, Mr. Christopher, and his staff, Deputy Secretary M. de Henseler, Mrs. Northworthy, Mrs. Mills and Mr. Drago we would not have succeeded.

We thank the Deputy Director of the Transport and Cartography Branch, M. Falçon, for his interest in our work.

Furthermore, we thank Madame Cestac, Director of the Interpretation and Meeting Division, and her staff for her willingness to support us in all questions of terminology.

On behalf of the whole Group of Experts I should like to thank the interpreters for their efficient work. They have contributed very much to our mutual understanding. In the case of non-native speakers of official United Nations languages the interpreters often have made a point clearer than it was presented in the original language. They can be assured, that we all esteem their ability and zeal very much.

And finally as the Chairman of this Group I should like to thank heartily all colleagues for their contributions to the common cause and personally for their co-operative spirit.

I wish you all a good journey home. The 8th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names is closed.