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Extraterrestrial Topographic Feature Names

(submitted by A.M. Komkov, Chairman of the USSR Division)

Information by the Chairman of
the Working Group on the Extra-
terrestrial Topographic Feature
Names

The period between the 8th and the 9th sessions of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names is defined by the subsequent development of the space research. The extensive programmes of cartography for Moon as well as for Mars, Mercury, Venus and other planets of the Solar system are being implemented. It considerably increased a need for a greater number of names for the different topographic features which are being discovered on the surface of planets under research, and at the same time required farther intensification of the names nomination procedure.

Resolution 23 (E/CONF.69/4) of the III UN Conference on Standardisation of the Geographical Names (Athens, 1977) acknowledged the leading role of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in the field of the extra-terrestrial topographic feature nomination and recommended to the UN Working Group to cooperate on this basis with the appropriate IAU bodies.

Such bodies are represented by the IAU Working Group on Extraterrestrial Nomenclature which combines the activities of the five task-force groups (TASK) on Nomenclature for Moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus and outer planets of the Solar system.

The Chairman of the UN Working Group upon the recommendation of the IAU Executive Committee was appointed as a consultant to the IAU working group which contributed to strengthening of the business-like contacts, made it possible to be well informed on the IAU activities in the field of Extraterrestrial Nomenclature and to influence its work when required. Without going once again into the contents of the report (document) submitted at the eight session of the Group of Experts in 1979 in the course of which

a system and procedure for the extraterrestrial topographic feature names nomination approved by the IAU were described, it should be stressed that such a system and procedure are being successively put into practice.

The major IAU Working Group as well as the IAU task force group are acting on a regular basis and with great efficiency.

The IAU Working Group on Extraterrestrial Nomenclature held its annual session in Washington (1977), in Innsbruck (1978), in Montreal (1979), in Budapest (1980) where the suggestions prepared by the task-force groups were under discussion.

The suggestions confirmed by the Working Group are transmitted for approval to the IAU Executive Committee without anticipation of the regular IAU General Assemblies which considerably expedites a possible use of the established names for maps under production and other publications. It should be noted that selection and establishment of the names are being carried out on the basis of the vast international representation.

For example, names are selected in honour of the well-known persons in the field of science, culture and art from different countries and nations. One can be convinced in such a procedure by making us of the report by the Chairman of the Working Group, Peter Millsen, submitted to the IAU Executive Committee.

As it was stressed in our report at the last session, in the situation of intensive and well organized IAU activities on extraterrestrial topographic feature nomination, it is advisable for the UN Working Group of Experts on Geographical Names to recommend to a greater number of countries to offer their suggestions on names for extraterrestrial features.

It doesn't require any special form but only a brief and convincing explanation.

It is also advisable to invite an IAU representative for the fourth regular UN Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names as it was done at the II London Conference.