

**Ninth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 21 - 30 August 2007

Item 17(g) of the provisional agenda*

Toponymic education and practice and international cooperation:

Cooperation with international organizations

Report of the International Hydrographic Organization

Submitted by the International Hydrographic Organization **

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Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names
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United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
24th Session, New York, USA, 20 and 31 August 2007

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As far as geographical naming is concerned, the IHO is involved in the following two activities, for which status reports are provided:

I. Undersea Feature Naming

The IHO participates, jointly with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (of UNESCO), in the work of the Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) of GEBCO¹. Reports of SCUFN meetings, as well as any new editions of products issued under SCUFN responsibility, are provided to UNGEGN Chairman/Secretary on a regular basis, in accordance with SCUFN terms of reference, which include *The Sub-Committee shall maintain close liaison with the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names and national authorities concerned with the naming of undersea features*. SCUFN-related documents are also available from the GEBCO website (www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/gebco/) and the IHO website (www.iho.int > GEBCO/SCUFN). SCUFN is currently chaired by Dr. Hans Werner SCHENKE, Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), Germany, and comprises 12 members representing IHO and IOC. The Sub-Committee has its secretariat at the International Hydrographic Bureau in Monaco. It meets once a year.

Two SCUFN meetings were held since the 23rd UNGEGN session in 2006.

A. The 19th meeting was held on 19-23 June 2006 in Bremerhaven, Germany and hosted by AWI. Dr. SCHENKE welcomed Dr. Hyun-Chul HAN, Rep. of Korea, as a new member of the sub-committee (IOC side).

The sub-committee reviewed a draft revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedures for SCUFN. A final text was agreed for submission to the GEBCO Guiding Committee.

The sub-committee also discussed some sections of IHO-IOC Publication B-6 “Standardization of Undersea Feature Names” (3rd edition, 2001), in order to better define the area of responsibility of SCUFN and clarify whom undersea features can be named for. It was agreed that SCUFN scope should be limited to areas located outside territorial waters usually limited to 12 nautical miles from the baseline, and that names of living persons should be limited to those who have made an outstanding or fundamental contribution to ocean sciences.

About 50 new name proposals were reviewed. In the end, 17 new names were accepted for inclusion in the GEBCO Gazetteer.

A demonstration, prepared at the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (co-located with the US NGDC in Boulder, Colorado), was given on how the undersea feature names included in the GEBCO Gazetteer can be displayed and searchable using Google Earth. The Sub-Committee agreed that this would make the Gazetteer more accessible to the public and give the work of SCUFN valuable international exposure.

¹ General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans, a joint IHO-IOC project

B. The 20th meeting was held on 9-12 July 2007 in Monaco, at the IHB, and chaired by Dr. SCHENKE. In welcoming the participants, Capt. Hugo GORZIGLIA, IHB Director, said that the fact that 10 out of 12 sub-committee members were present indicated that the group had captured the attention within GEBCO and the outside world.

The sub-committee reviewed again the SCUFN Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure, in the light of the comments made during the 17th IH Conference in May 2007. After lengthy discussion, a revised text was finally agreed upon. It will be further examined at the GEBCO Guiding Committee meeting in November 2007, then submitted to IHO and IOC member states for approval.

The sub-committee re-addressed the revision of Publication B-6. It was agreed that the Terminology section of this document also needs revision. This section includes generic terms and definitions and the current GEBCO policy of only considering geomorphological expression of features in the naming process. A sub-group was set up to propose improvements to this section. English/Japanese and English/Russian versions of B-6, based on the existing English/French version, were approved by the sub-committee.

The sub-committee reviewed 53 new name proposals, mainly in the Pacific and Arctic Oceans, and the Ross Sea. In the end, 37 new names were accepted for inclusion in the GEBCO Gazetteer.

The next SCUFN meeting has been planned in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, in May 2008.

II. Limits of Oceans and Seas

The IHO has produced Publication S-23 “Limits of Oceans and Seas”, for the purpose of consistent nautical cartography and in the interest of safety of navigation at sea. The edition in force is still the 3rd edition, dated 1953, which is available from the IHO website (www.iho.shom.fr > Publications > S-23). A 4th edition of the publication has been under preparation for some time. It has not yet been finalized.

A “Report on the Work on the Publication on Limits of Oceans and Seas (S-23)” was presented to the 17th International Hydrographic Conference by the IHB President, Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS. In introducing the report, he explained the history of the revision of IHO Publication S-23 since the 1977 decision of the 11th IHC. Thirty years on, the work remained incomplete owing to the contentious and highly sensitive nature of the political issues involved. Recent bilateral discussions between Japan and Republic of Korea over the name of “Japan Sea” did not seem to have made significant progress towards a resolution. Statements were then made by the delegations of Republic of Korea, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and Japan.

In order to make progress to this issue the President of the Conference suggested different options that may be considered by the interested States, discussing mainly the option where S-23 could be published in two volumes, the first of which would cover all the agreed issues while referring to the second volume, which would not be published, for the matters which remained unresolved. The delegations of the interested States were asked to inform their Governments on this option and advise the IHB whether their Governments would agree to the publication of volume 1, omitting the disputed portion.

III. The IHO will continue cooperating with the UNGEGN and support actions needed that will enhance safety at sea and protection of the marine environment.