

**Ninth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**
New York, 21 - 30 August 2007
Item 15(b) of the provisional agenda*
**Features beyond a single sovereignty:
Features common to two or more nations**

**Report on the Progress in Consultations on the Naming of the Sea Area
between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago**

Submitted by the Republic of Korea **

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** Prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea.

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Report on the Progress in Consultations on the Naming of the Sea Area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago

Since the Republic of Korea brought the issue of the naming of the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago to the attention of the Member States of the United Nations at the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) in 1992, the UNCSGN has recognized the efforts of the Republic of Korea to restore the proper name for the area. In particular, in the Chairman's Summary, the Eighth UNCSGN held in Berlin in August 2002 "encouraged the three concerned countries to continue their efforts to find a solution acceptable to all of them, taking into account relevant resolutions, or else agree to differ, and to report the outcome of their discussions to the next Conference."

Pursuant to the recommendations of the Conference, the Republic of Korea has made continuous efforts to seek a mutually agreeable solution through bilateral consultations with Japan. The Republic of Korea have, since the first consultation held at the diplomatic level between the two countries in September 2003, sent letters on four occasions urging Japan to continue diplomatic consultations. However, the Republic of Korea has not had the chance to embark on constructive consultations, mainly due to the unwillingness of Japan to engage in substantive discussions between the responsible authorities of the two countries.

Against this backdrop, four rounds of bilateral discussions between the two countries have been conducted only through the channel of meetings at the technical level between hydrographic authorities. Japan's pronounced position of "no flexibility," not considering any other option than the single and exclusive use of "Sea of Japan" throughout the meetings, has prevented the two parties from having meaningful discussions and making progress on this matter. Most recently, the Republic of Korea sent a letter to Japan on resuming the diplomatic consultation in January 2007, but the meeting between authorities in charge from the two countries has not yet been arranged.

In spite of all that, the international community increasingly recognizes the legitimacy of the name "East Sea," responding positively to the efforts of the Republic of Korea to restore the name to its rightful place. First of all, many prominent mapmakers are adopting the concurrent use of "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan." The percentage of dual denominations used in commercially available maps worldwide has reached 23.8% in 2007, representing a sharp rise from 2.8% in 2000. More noteworthy is that maps of countries such as the US, the UK, France, Germany, Canada and Italy, which produce the majority of the world's maps, evidenced a total of 50.4% of usage of both names. These statistics are strong indication that the name "East Sea" is increasingly being used internationally.

In addition, the President of the 17th International Hydrographic Conference, held last May, said that the revision of IHO Publication S-23 "Limits of Oceans and Seas" was still not complete owing to the contentious and highly sensitive issues in the naming of the sea between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago. Taking the sensitivity and

significance of the issues into account, the President, in the Conference, proposed various possible solutions, noting that nothing would be resolved pending an agreement among the concerned countries such as the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan. Among the proposed options, he preferred the option whereby the S-23 could be published in two volumes, the first of which would cover all the agreed issues while the second volume, which would be published at a later stage, would be referred to for those matters which remained unresolved such as the issue of naming the sea between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago. The IHO concluded that the three countries directly concerned in the naming dispute should advise the IHO whether their Governments would agree to the publication of the S-23 omitting the disputed portion. The IHO's conclusion shows sincere efforts to publish a newly revised S-23 without further delay and was tantamount to refuting the Japanese assertion that the single and exclusive use of name "Sea of Japan" has been internationally established in that area.

In response to the IHO decision, the Republic of Korea, as referred to in a letter sent to the IHO, has decided to agree to the immediate publication of the S-23 omitting the disputed portion as recommended by the President since the Republic of Korea does not wish to see any further delay in the publication of the S-23. Accordingly, the Republic of Korea urges the concerned countries, including Japan, to swiftly provide a constructive response to the President's proposal, thereby paving the way for the publication of the long-awaited S-23.

A review of the historical background reveals that "East Sea" is the legitimate designation for the sea area in question. No single name was either consistently used to designate this body of water or recognized internationally until the 19th century. During this period, this sea area was referred to by various names such as the "Sea of Korea", "East Sea", "Sea of Japan" and "Oriental Sea". For the past 2,000 years, however, the sea area has been consistently called "East Sea" in Korea.

In the late 19th century, Japan's influence in East Asia began to expand rapidly and finally Japan colonized Korea in 1910. The absence of diplomatic representation of Korea at international fora during the first half of the 20th century gave Japan a free hand to promote the term "Sea of Japan" with virtually no opposition.

Against this background, the 1929 International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) meeting decided to designate the sea area as the "Sea of Japan" in the first edition of "Limits of Oceans and Seas(S-23)." Unfortunately, the third and most recent edition of the book was published in 1953 leaving the name "Sea of Japan" intact as Korea languished in the Korean War, still without membership in the IHO.

Apart from the historical validity of the use of the name "East Sea", it is inappropriate to name a sea area surrounded by several countries after a single country without the consent, implicit or explicit, of other states directly involved. Lying between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago, the body of water in question is divided into either the territorial waters or the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the countries encircling it. There is no possible justification for designating a sea area that falls into the jurisdiction of different countries after the name of a single country when other parties directly concerned strongly oppose it.

Koreans deserve to have their voice heard in determining the name of the sea in question for the simple reason that the Korean people have used the term "East Sea" for 2,000

years and people on the Korean Peninsula will continue to use the name. Above all, in this position the Republic of Korea faithfully adheres to the international resolutions on that matter. Resolution III/20 of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) and IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6 recommend that when countries sharing a given geographical feature fail to agree on a common name, both names should be used.

In light of the background and the current status of the issue of naming the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago, therefore, it is the Republic of Korea's firm position that, in accordance with the abovementioned Resolution of the UNCSGN and the Technical Resolution of the IHO and in deference to the general principles and practices of international cartography, the adoption of the dual term of "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan" is the only logical and viable solution, pending an agreement on a common name between the countries concerned.

The government of the Republic of Korea remains open to any constructive suggestions which may lead to a mutually acceptable resolution of this important issue. As such, the Republic of Korea hopes that the government of Japan will show a reasonable degree of flexibility in this regard.