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Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

**Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227:
further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of
the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields**

**Subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social
Council
and the General Assembly in the economic, social
and related fields**

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report updates documents E/1996/97 of 23 September 1996 and E/1996/97/Add.1 of 30 January 1997. It provides information on the establishment, terms of reference, membership and composition, term of office of members, reporting procedure, frequency of meetings, and working methods of subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in the economic, social and related fields.

* E/2001/100.

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2. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Terms of reference

306. The Council, in its resolution 715 A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959, requested the Secretary - General to set up a small group of consultants to consider the technical problems of domestic standardization of geographical names, including the preparation of a statement of the general and regional problems involved, to prepare draft recommendations for the procedures, principally linguistic, that might be followed in the standardization of their own names by individual countries and to report to the Council on the desirability of holding an international conference on this subject and of the sponsoring of working groups based on common linguistic systems.

307. The First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names was held at Geneva from 4 to 22 September 1967. On the basis of the recommendations of the Conference, the Council, in its resolution 1314 (XLVI) of 31 May 1968, approved the terms of reference for the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, which was renamed the "United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names" by a Council decision of 4 May 1973.

308. In its decision 1988/116 of 25 May 1988, the Council also approved the statute and rules of procedure of the Group of Experts (E/1988/22, annex II). In its decision 1993/226 of 12 July 1993, the Council approved a new version of the statute (see E/1993/21 and Corr.1, annex).

309. The basic aims of the Group of Experts are:

(a) To emphasize the importance of the standardization of geographical names at the national and international levels and to demonstrate the benefits to be derived from such standardization;

(b) To collect the results of the work of national and international bodies dealing with the standardization of geographical names and to facilitate the dissemination of these results to States Members of the United Nations;

(c) To study and propose principles, policies and methods suitable for resolving problems of national and international standardization;

(d) To play an active role, by facilitating the supply of scientific and technical help, in particular to developing countries, in creating mechanisms for the national and international standardization of geographical names;

(e) To provide a vehicle for liaison and coordination among Member States, and between Member States and international organizations, on work associated with the standardization of geographical names;

(f) To implement the tasks assigned as a result of the resolutions adopted at the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

310. To further the aims stated above, the functions of the Group of Experts are:

(a) To develop procedures and establish mechanisms for standardization in response to national requirements and particular requests;

(b) To undertake preparatory work for the periodic international conferences on the standardization of geographical names, to provide continuity for activities between conferences, and to provide leadership in the implementation of resolutions adopted at the conferences;

(c) To encourage the discussion and study of practical and theoretical steps directed towards standardization;

(d) To coordinate the activities of linguistic/geographical divisions formed to further the work at the national level, to encourage the active participation of countries and divisions, and to promote a degree of uniformity in the work undertaken;

(e) To create any necessary structure to supplement the work of divisions and to deal with issues beyond the scope of a division;

(f) To develop appropriate programmes to assist individual countries and group of countries, to achieve standardization where it is lacking;

(g) To make mapping organizations aware of the importance of using standardized geographical names;

(h) To maintain liaison with international organizations dealing with related subjects and encourage group divisions to participate in the United Nations regional or other cartographic conferences;

(i) To work at the highest possible national, international and United Nations level to interrelate toponymy and cartography;

(j) To make standardization principles and standardized geographical names available as practical information for as wide a user community as possible, through all appropriate media.

Membership and composition

311. The Group is composed of some 150 experts from 52 countries, organized into 22 linguistic/geographical divisions. Within this Group, several working groups have been created to carry out special tasks, such as the setting up of training courses in toponymy, the comparative study of the various systems of transliteration towards a single romanization system for each of the non-Roman writing systems and the production of international gazetteers.

Reporting procedure

312. The Group of Experts normally reports to the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. In addition, the Secretary-General presents a report on each session of the Group of Experts to the subsequent session of the Council.

Frequency of meetings

313. The Group of Experts normally meets biennially. In years when a United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names is held, it meets on dates immediately preceding the opening date of the conference and immediately following the closing date of the conference.