

Statements by Japan

DELIVERED on Wednesday 16 August 2017
at the 11th United Nations Conference
on the Standardization of Geographical Names

Agenda Item 17: Features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation

(a) Features common to two or more nations

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Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations,
Head of Delegation of Japan to the 11th United Nations Conference
on the Standardization of Geographical Names,
with regard to the remarks made by the Representative of the Republic of Korea

1. First statement

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me briefly react to the remarks made by the distinguished Representative of the Republic of Korea.

While a land feature is either entirely under a single territorial sovereignty, or completely divided into two or more different sovereignties, seas and oceans, in principle, include areas which are not under sovereignty. This is the very reason why the UN Resolution III/20 explicitly limits its scope to land features that are “under the sovereignty of more than one country or are divided among two or more countries”, and also the IHO Technical Resolution A4.2.6 limits its scope to given maritime features other than oceans or seas such as bays and straits.

And against this backdrop, particular sea names, based on particular demarcation of sea areas, gradually establish themselves as international standards. This is the basis of the IHO’s work, for example, related to the limits and names of oceans and seas, which has consisted of identifying standardized sea names for all sea areas as defined by standardized demarcation of water bodies, out of countless local names in different languages.

Any action, including adopting a UNCSGN resolution, disregarding such differences between land and ocean or sea features, and allowing local sea names being printed alongside internationally established names, could only disrupt the existing work of such bodies as the IHO, which supports safety of navigation. It should also be

noted that such attempts could increase political tensions around the world by bringing sensitive sea-name disputes to the surface.

Therefore, Mr. Chair, Japan strongly believes that any such attempt leading to dual use of different names for a particular sea area is totally inappropriate and so should be refused.

As I clearly mentioned earlier in this Conference, “Sea of Japan” is the only international name for the sea area concerned, and was established in the early 19th century. Any attempt aimed at changing the status of the name “Sea of Japan” which is the internationally established name, by allowing the dual use of the name “*East Sea*”, which is used exclusively on the Korean Peninsula, alongside the standard name, is a unilateral act based on political purposes, and even harms the safety of international maritime transport.

We should never accept such attempts.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.

2. Second statement

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I’m obliged to respond to the presentation just made by the distinguished Representative of the Republic of Korea, but before mentioning my responses to the statement made by them, I have to underline the important code of conduct in this forum; that is, to avoid the politicization of the process. I have already made this point in the previous sessions in this Conference. This is not the appropriate place to decide names or to air political arguments, as the UNGEGN chair said at the beginning and as the Member States are well aware.

Having said this, in response to the points made by the Republic of Korea, I have to again underscore the UN Resolution III/20, and the limitations of its scope to land features that are under the sovereignty of more than one country or divided among two or more countries, and also the IHO Technical Resolution A4.2.6, which also limits its scope to given maritime features other than oceans and seas, such as bays and

straights.

As for the name of the sea area, which was also referred to by the distinguished Representative of the Republic of Korea, as I clearly mentioned earlier in this Conference, “Sea of Japan” is the only international name for the sea area concerned, which was established in the early 19th century. So, any attempt aimed at changing the status of the name “Sea of Japan” as the internationally established name, by allowing the dual use of that standard name and “*East Sea*”, which is exclusively used on the Korean Peninsula, is a unilateral act based on political purposes, and harms even the safety of international maritime transport.

And also, there was the introduction of the invitation to the International Seminar on Sea Names, which will be organized by South Korea. We would like to see that such international seminars should be conducted in a neutral manner without politicizing the purpose.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.