

Standardization in the Treatment of Generic Elements in Toponyms

At the close of the Second U.N. Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in London in May 1972, Messrs Smart (Canada) and Kalinin (U.S.S.R.) framed a draft recommendation addressed to the matter of inclusion or omission of generic elements in toponyms. That draft recommendation was referred to the Fifth Meeting of the U.N. Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

The following draft resolution embodies the principles set forth in the Smart-Kalinin recommendation, and also draws on work done by the two U.N. Conferences (Geneva 1967 and London 1972) and by the U.N. GEGN.

The U.N. GEGN,

recognizing the value of standard procedures for the treatment of generic elements of toponyms, and

recognizing that such treatment should be respectful of the character of each toponym,

recommends that toponyms appear in all contexts in a form which includes both specific and generic elements*, where these are intrinsic parts of the name, or where omission of a generic element might result in impaired clarity;

recommends that clear indication appear in geographical dictionaries, gazetteers, and other lists, where omission of a generic element is deemed permissible;

further recommends that, without prejudice to the employment of established exonyms, specific elements of toponyms not be translated from one language to another; and

suggests that generic elements may be translated in contexts outside their language of origin where this procedure benefits communication.

* (See element, specific and element, generic, E/CONF. 61/L.1/R.1/p.4.)