

30 August 2002

Original: English

Eighth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names
Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002
Item 15 (b) of the provisional agenda"

FEATURES BEYOND A SINGLE SOVEREIGNTY: FEATURES COMMON TO
TWO OR MORE NATIONS

The Naming of Sea of Japan

(Submitted by Japan)

The naming of Sea of Japan

The purpose of the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names is to standardize geographical names and to achieve unification of naming methodologies, thereby preventing confusion in the use of names of geographical features and promoting economic and social activities in the member countries. Japan, therefore, believes that, as a matter of principle, it is not appropriate to discuss the matter of the naming of individual geographic features such as Sea of Japan at this Conference.

This is a subject on which Japanese delegation expressed its views at the previous Conferences (6th and 7th), and its views were then duly recorded.

The followings are major points to be reiterated for better understanding of this matter.

The Government of the Republic of Korea raised a question on the naming of Sea of Japan for the first time at the 6th Conference in 1992 and also at the International Hydrographic Conference (IHO) in 1997, arguing that Sea of Japan should be replaced by or at least co-named with "East Sea".

The Government of Japan considers that there is no reason to change the existing naming Sea of Japan, which has long been employed in IHO and internationally established as a single name.

Some delegates argue that the name Sea of Japan became widely accepted at the time of Japanese colonial rule over Korean Peninsular in early 20th century, but the fact is that Sea of Japan has been widely accepted and internationally established since around late 18th century. The survey conducted by the Government of Japan in 2000 shows that more than 97% of 392 representative maps published in 60 countries (excluding ROK, DPRK and Japan) use solely the name Sea of Japan. The introducing other names unreasonably would inevitably cause confusion and also create a bad precedent. It would not be in line with the aim of standardization of geographical names.

At the last Conference in 1998, the chairperson concluded that the Conference was not able to reach a consensus on this very delicate issue, and urged the respective parties concerned to try to reach agreement.

The Government of Japan is of the view that it is important to continue discussions on a bilateral basis.