

United Nations Resolution V/9 on Geographical Names

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Abstract

Implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions ensures optimal standardization of geographical names at both national and international levels. In certain areas the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) has achieved remarkable success in this regard. The names of maritime and undersea features, which frequently fall beyond the jurisdiction of any one country, remain problematic. In accordance with the prime objective of the United Nations in terms of its Charter; in pursuance of resolutions II/24 and V/9 of the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, and in accordance with recommendations by UNGEGN experts and of the UNGEGN's Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation, a publication on maritime feature names has been prepared with a view to promoting national and international standardization of geographical names. The present paper elaborates on the content of the draft document and possible publication thereof.

Background

In terms of the Charter of the United Nations, the primary aim of that organization is to maintain world peace and avoid conflict between nations (*Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* 1999). The United Nations long ago realized that a standing expert body was required to advise it on geographical names, and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) was established in pursuance of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions 715 A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959 and 1314 (LXIV) of 31 May 1968, to further the standardization of geographical names at both the national and international levels.

The UNGEGN is composed of experts designated by governments of member States to the United Nations and individuals specifically invited to participate, and is the most authoritative body on geographical names in the world.

United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names are held every five years. Implementation of resolutions adopted at these conferences, and ratified by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, ensures optimal standardization of geographical names at both national and international levels.

Considerable success has been achieved in respect of the national standardization of geographical names, since the sovereign right of each nation is recognized to standardize the geographical names under its jurisdiction, and international standardization implies the implementation of these decisions at the international level.

However, since the greater parts of maritime features fall beyond a single sovereignty, and beyond any sovereignty at all, United Nations resolutions I/8 B, III/21 and IV/12 recommend seeking agreement between nations sharing a particular feature, and consultation with relevant bodies, namely the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) and the International Association of Physical Oceanography (IAPO).

In 1929 the IHO published its *Limits of Oceans and Seas* (Special Publication 23). In 1953 the third edition of this publication appeared, and in 2002 the fourth edition was circulated (Choo 2007a: 162), this last-mentioned publication containing 153 limits and their corresponding names. Kim (2007: 135) has pointed out that the development of scientific technology and changes in the marine environment have made the publication of a revised edition a matter of urgency. It was noted at the 17th International Hydrographic Conference, held in May 2007 in Monaco, that the publication had been delayed (Choo 2007b: 141-2).

Working Groups of the UNGEGN

Working Groups have been formed within the UNGEGN to deal with particular issues. Thus there is a working group on Romanization systems for non-Roman scripts, one on training courses in toponymy, one on data exchange formats and standards, on publicity and funding, on names of countries, on evaluation and implementation, and so forth. One of these was the Working Group on Undersea and Maritime Features. This working group completed its tasks in regard to undersea features, as called for by resolution III/22, and it was decided by resolution IV/12 that the task of the Working Group should be limited to maritime features, and that this work should be further co-ordinated with similar work of the International Hydrographic Office (IHO).

Publications of the Working Groups

Resolution V/9 emphasizes the need for the international exchange of information on national and international standardization of geographical names, and recommends an increase in the preparation and co-ordination of publications that facilitate the exchange of information and transfer of knowledge in the field of geographical names.

In pursuance of that resolution, a variety of publications has emanated from the working groups, including the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, edited by Professor Naftali Kadmon, Convenor of the Working Group on Terminology; *Manual for Training Courses in Toponymy*, edited by the convenor, Professor Ferjan Ormeling; *Romanization Systems for non-Roman Scripts*, under the convenorship of Dr Peeter Päll, and *UNGEGN Statutes, Rules of Procedure and Resolutions on Geographical Names*, under the convenorship of Professor Ki-Suk Lee, the Convenor of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation.

In accordance with the objectives of the 14th International Seminar on Names of Seas, and in pursuance of resolution V/9, a publication has been prepared on scientific principles, under the title *Names of Maritime Features*. An Introduction gives the necessary background to the publication, including selection criteria and an indication of

the scale of maps used for different countries. In accordance with UN resolution II/16, a glossary of marine generic terms is provided, as well as a Bibliography.

This document contains the names of 694 maritime features, including not only names of oceans and seas, but also of gulfs, bights, bays, straits, channels, sounds, fiords, and so forth. Names of major features have been included, and also those important from a geographical, historical, etymological, economic, cultural, or other point of view.

In pursuance of resolution 4E of the First Conference, relating to the preparation of national gazetteers, the following minimum information is included, for the proper location and identification of the named features, and in particular:

- (a) The kind of feature to which the name applies;
- (b) Precise description of the location and the extent, including a point position reference if possible, of each named feature;
- (c) Provision for the parts of natural features to be additionally defined by reference to the whole and for the names of extended features to be defined as necessary by reference to their constituent parts;
- (d) Such information on administrative or regional areas as is considered necessary;
- (e) All officially standardized names for a feature, if there are more than one; and provision for cross-references to be made to names previously used for the same feature.

The entries in the publication under discussion are arranged alphabetically, with a description of the kind of feature to which the name refers, and a description of the location of each feature, as well as a point position in degrees and minutes, and sometimes in seconds as well. The co-ordinates were taken from a variety of sources, and in some cases they gave different co-ordinates, so it is uncertain whether the same criteria were followed by all. In some cases it was stated that an approximate point reference was given.

This publication is in English, and in keeping with the sources used, English exonyms were used in cases where the names are from other languages. Where the feature had ancient names, these, too, have been given. In instances where the feature also has an endonym in languages spoken in areas contiguous to the feature in question, these endonyms have been provided, with cross-references at the appropriate locations. In this way resolution I/4E is also implemented, since by means of this publication nationally standardized names are disseminated.

Cognizance was taken of Professor Choo's recommendations (2007b: 144-145), namely that some interesting and fresh research results should be provided; that researches should be more oriented to indirect and technical approaches; that attention should be given to historical legitimacy, as well as to the question of endonyms and exonyms and dual naming, and to researches in the sphere of general toponymy, with attention also being given to geographical names as cultural heritage, and issues such as commemorative naming; that guidelines should be provided a database established, and in

particular an analysis of UN resolutions should be undertaken, with specific focus on the degree of implementation, and reporting the result.

Accordingly, this publication includes also some historical facts, aspects of mythology where these are relevant to the name and its etymology; endonyms, exonyms and allonyms are given, providing insight into the use of such names. Commemorative names abound in maritime feature names, since navigators, discoverers and explorers were frequently honoured by having features named after them. Members of royal families and other nobles and dignitaries have also been remembered, as have been politicians, statesmen and national heroes. Some names commemorate historical and other events. By the preparation of this document the focus has been placed on general toponymic research, and the corpus of material provides a basis for further research.

The publication has been compiled from old and new atlases, gazetteers, encyclopaedias, specialist research results, and the like, incorporating the collective experience and expertise of cartographers, geographers, historians, oceanographers, geographical names experts and others over a long period of time. It therefore provides a useful source of knowledge and information on names of maritime features as recommended by resolution II/24, which recognizes “that the absence of an international convention or any other international document determining the rules and procedures of naming and designating features beyond a single sovereignty presents an obstacle to production and application of maps and other documents for international use”, and “recommends that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names give consideration to the elaboration of such a document in collaboration with the corresponding United Nations bodies and other international organizations competent in this problem.”

Maritime feature names are *par excellence* names of features beyond a single sovereignty, and indeed beyond any sovereignty. By studying them and the underlying processes the relevant organizations referred to in the above resolution may be able to determine the rules and procedures that have so long eluded us all.

This is a useful book, bringing together for the first time specifically names of maritime features and information on these features. It will be an indispensable reference work for national geographical names authorities, oceanographers, marine geologists, marine biologists, cartographers, scientists, researchers, academics, teachers, journalists, politicians, historians, travellers and tourists, search and rescue operators, and everyone else who uses the names of maritime features.

Publication of the Document

The question that now arises is: Who should publish this book?

The document *Names of Maritime Features* was prepared in pursuance of United Nations resolutions, and by its publication other United Nations resolutions will be implemented. It is therefore appropriate that the UNGEGN Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation, which was established specifically to facilitate and ensure implementation of UN resolutions on geographical names, should publish this document,

as it did with its publication *Statutes, Rules of Procedure and Resolutions on Geographical Names* (Seoul, 2002), distributed to more than 80 countries.

The Working Group may wish to submit an application to the next UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names for the United Nations to publish this document as it has done in similar instances, e.g. the *Training Manual* and the *Glossary*. If this is decided upon, a draft resolution will be necessary for submission to the Conference. In anticipation of this, a draft resolution has been prepared.

Draft resolution: Support for publication

The Conference,

Recognizing the importance, for the foreseeable future, of both electronic and print versions of documents available in all official languages of the United Nations and, in this connection;

Requests the Statistics Division to include in its publication programme for the biennium 2010–2011 a publication of about one hundred pages on *Names of Maritime Features*.

Publication by the United Nations takes time, being subject to prioritization and budgeting. Therefore the Working Group may decide to publish this document independently, as it has done before, thus ensuring timely implementation of resolutions; or it may approach interested organizations outside the United Nations to undertake the publication.

Conclusion

The present publication is a first edition, and as such will in due course be refined and added to. With a view to assisting the editor of subsequent editions, the following procedures may be considered:

- Liaison with the Northeast Asian Historical Foundation, the Society for East Sea, and other relevant bodies
- Drawing up of Budget and securing of funding
- Establishment of Editorial Board and appointment of staff
- Infrastructure required
- Editorial policies: inter alia languages of names to be included, fields of data (country of jurisdiction where relevant), etc.
- Procedures and methods
- Translation into the other official languages of the United Nations.

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Addendum: United Nations Resolutions Referred to in this Paper

I/4 NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

RECOMMENDATION E.

NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

It is recommended that each names authority produce, and continually revise, appropriate gazetteers of all its standardized geographical names.

It is further recommended that, in addition to the standardized names, each gazetteer include, as a minimum, such information as is necessary for the proper location and identification of the named features.

In particular, it is recommended that the following be included:

- (a) The kind of feature to which the name applies;
- (b) Precise description of the location and the extent, including a point position reference if possible, of each named feature;
- (c) Provision for the parts of natural features to be additionally defined by reference to the whole and for the names of extended features to be defined as necessary by reference to their constituent parts;
- (d) Such information on administrative or regional areas as is considered necessary and, if possible, reference to a map or chart within which the features lie;
- (e) All officially standardized names for a feature, if there are more than one; and provision for cross-references to be made to names previously used for the same feature.

CO-OPERATION AND LIAISON

I/8 B Maritime and Undersea Features

The Conference,

Having discussed some of the problems arising from a lack of international standardization of names of maritime and undersea features,

Recognizing the necessity for international standardization of names in and under ocean areas to promote the safety of navigation and to facilitate the exchange of scientific oceanographic data,

Noting that valuable initial steps have been taken towards standardization of both the nomenclature of hydrographic and undersea features and the geographical names of some of these features by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), the International Association of Physical Oceanography (IAPO), and member nations,

1. *Recommends* that the proposed United Nations Permanent Committee of Experts on Geographical Names should:
 - (a) Obtain from the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) and the International Association of Physical Oceanography (IAPO), full particulars of the work already accomplished by those organizations;
 - (b) Establish means for the collection, approval and distribution by the United Nations of both a list of agreed terms and definitions for nomenclature of maritime and undersea features and an initial list of recommended geographical names for features requiring names;
 - (c) Develop procedures for international standardization of naming new undersea features as they are discovered, defined and identified in the future;

- (d) Continue to consult with and, as appropriate, to use the facilities of IOC, IHB, IAPO and other relevant bodies to further United Nations objectives in international standardization of names of maritime and undersea features;
2. *Further recommends* that copies of this resolution be forwarded immediately to IOC, IHB and IAPO.

II/16 Uniformity of presentation of glossaries

The Conference,

Recognizing the need for uniformity in the presentation of glossaries in gazetteers,

Further recognizing that such uniformity is difficult to pursue in detail,

Recommends that:

(a) Each gazetteer or geographical dictionary should include:

- (i) An exhaustive alphabetized glossary of the designatory terms used in it, with a brief explanation of their meanings;
- (ii) An exhaustive alphabetized glossary of the generic terms occurring in it, with a brief explanation as to their meanings and their regional distributions, and with reference to the designatory terms under which they are headed;
- (iii) An exhaustive glossary of abbreviations of designations or of other codes used for them;
- (iv) An exhaustive alphabetized glossary of abbreviations used in maps on which the gazetteer is based;

(b) Each gazetteer and geographical dictionary may include, where useful, a glossary of frequently recurring name elements other than generic terms;

(c) The designatory terms and the brief explanations referred to in subparagraphs (a) (i) and (ii) above should be translated into one or more of the official languages of the United Nations, where the original document itself is not in one of those languages.

II/24 Standardization of names beyond a single sovereignty

The Conference,

Recognizing the increased tempo and volume of research and investigations of the world, the ocean, Antarctica and space, including the moon and the solar planets,

Recognizing further that the absence of an international convention or any other international document determining the rules and procedures of naming and designating features beyond a single sovereignty presents an obstacle to production and application of maps and other documents for international use,

Considering that a special document elaborated under the auspices of the United Nations might provide a general base for adopting technical rules and procedures for the naming and renaming of various kinds of extraterrestrial topographic features and geographical features beyond a single sovereignty,

Recommends that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names give consideration to the elaboration of such a document in collaboration with the corresponding United Nations bodies and other international organizations competent in this problem.

III/21 Maritime feature names

The Conference,

Having considered resolution 22 of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names,

Noting that the International Hydrographic Organization has designated a technical committee to recommend improvements in procedures for naming oceans and seas and their integral subdivisions — referred to as maritime features — beyond the limits of national jurisdiction,

Recognizing the progress made by the International Hydrographic Organization in standardizing names of maritime features,

1. *Expresses* its appreciation to the International Hydrographic Association for its offer to assist in United Nations programmes related to maritime features;
2. *Recommends* that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names coordinate its programmes with those of the International Hydrographic Organization.

III/22 Undersea feature names

The Conference,

Recalling resolution 26 of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names,

Considering the increased activity in ocean research and the need to develop names to identify a rapidly growing number of newly discovered undersea features,

Recognizing that such names are required for certain hydrographic publications and for bathymetric charts or related material used for research documentation,

Noting that a set of procedures developed by the United Nations would, if implemented by all Member States, lead to a desirable degree of uniformity in naming new features, while also establishing a mechanism for resolving conflicts over or duplication of names,

Realizing the interest of the International Hydrographic Organization and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in standardizing not only procedures for naming but also the names themselves,

Recommends that the principles and policies, as well as the name proposal form put before the Conference, be submitted to the International Hydrographic Organization for the purpose of developing an agreed statement to meet requirements for an internationally acceptable set of guidelines designed to ensure maximum standardization of undersea feature names.

II *The Conference,*

Noting that national and international organizations may employ different terms and definitions for undersea features,

Realizing that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has elaborated a list of terms and definitions that differ from those approved and submitted to the Conference by the International Hydrographic Organization,

Recommends that the Group of Experts, in collaboration with the International Hydrographic Organization, develop, for international use, a joint list of terms and definitions for undersea features.

IV/12 Maritime and undersea feature names

The Conference,

Noting that the Working Group on Undersea and Maritime Features of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names has completed its tasks in regard to

undersea features, as called for by resolution 22 of the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names,

Observing that work in maritime features has not been finished, but should be further coordinated with similar work of the International Hydrographic Office, as recommended by the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in its resolution 21,

1. *Recommends* that the task of the Working Group should be limited to maritime features;
2. *Further recommends* that the Group of Experts should identify a point of contact to carry out essential liaison and communications regarding names of undersea features proposed by national bodies.

V/9 United Nations publications

The Conference,

Reaffirming the need for the international exchange of information on achievements in the field of national and international standardization of geographical names,

1. *Notes* with satisfaction the publication by the United Nations of volume XVIII of *World Cartography* (in 1986), devoted to the subject of geographical names, which has been distributed throughout the world and greatly acclaimed by Member States;
2. *Recommends* that the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations Secretariat be encouraged to increase its involvement in the preparation and co-ordination of United Nations publications that facilitate the exchange of information and transfer of knowledge in the field of geographical names.

COMMEMORATIVE NAMING PRACTICES

VIII/2 Commemorative naming practices for geographical features

The Conference,

Noting that the use of names of persons or events to designate features for commemorative purposes or as geographical reminders constitutes an active practice,

Recognizing that the attribution of a personal name to a geographical feature during the lifetime or shortly after the death of a person is a widespread practice,

Recalling that, during a meeting in 1960, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names acknowledged that the naming or renaming of a geographical feature to include the name of a living person could be a source of problems,

Recognizing that the practice is generally disadvantageous, as this type of designation is subject to subsequent changes not recommended by the Conference,

Noting that little guidance exists on the practice of adopting a personal name during the lifetime or shortly after the death of a person,

1. *Recommends* that the appropriate national authorities discourage the use of personal names to designate a geographical feature during the lifetime of the person in question;
2. *Also recommends* that the appropriate national authorities include in their guidelines clear statements on the length of the waiting period they wish to establish before using a commemorative name.

HISTORICAL HERITAGE

VIII/9 Geographical names as cultural heritage; commemorative names

The Conference,

Recognizing the emphasis placed by delegates at the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names on the importance of geographical names as part of a nation's historical and cultural heritage;

Noting that the collection of geographical names in many countries of the world is made increasingly difficult as a result of the rapid pace of socio-economic change impacting on society and landscape;

Recalling the recommendation made by the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in its resolution 27, as well as the recommendations made by the Seventh Conference in its resolution VII/5, that measures be taken nationally to ensure that the names that are yet to be collected are recorded through fieldwork according to the local usage of name forms;

Urges countries that have not already done so, to undertake both the systematic collection of geographical names and the promotion of a greater understanding among the wider public of the significance of inherited geographical names with respect to local, regional and national heritage and identity.