

Agenda Item 7: National and international standardization of geographical names
(a) Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single
sovereignty and international cooperation

Statement delivered by H. E. Mr. Yasuhisa KAWAMURA,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations,
Head of Delegation of Japan to the First United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names,
with regard to the working paper GEGN.2/2019/CRP.130
and in response to the remarks made by the Representative of the Republic of Korea

[1st intervention]

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I would like to thank the distinguished delegate of the Republic of Korea about the explanation and the presentation concerning the paper CRP.130. We're obliged to point out just briefly the comments in light of international reality, practicality and consistency which the UNGEGN experts are expected to ensure.

First, the technicality of the UNGEGN.

The UNGEGN focuses on technical issues associated with the standardization of geographical names as stipulated in OP1 of the Resolution E/CONF.105/L.3. Nevertheless, the paper 130 makes argument on the assumption that the UNGEGN has the mandate to make any decision or judgement on the use of individual and specific geographical names. However, the UNGEGN is not an appropriate venue to pursue such a highly political issue. The UNGEGN is a technical body which pursues for standardizing geographical names. All the members of the new UNGEGN desire to proceed their works with its practical and technical expertise.

Second, the lack of consistency.

The UNGEGN Resolution III/20 explicitly limits its scope to land features that fall under the sovereignty of more than one country or divided among two or more countries. But the paper 130 demonstrates an undeniable level of inconsistency by unilaterally interpreting the mandate of the “new UNGEGN as a forum of cooperation on geographical names for features beyond a single sovereignty including both land and maritime features”, which is totally out of the scope of the Resolution III/20. We do not find it necessary to re-evaluate the UNCSGN Resolution III/20. There is no technical problem raised by any members so far. This resolution has an important mandate to reinforce confidence in its expertise on technical issues through the institutional reform of 2017. We should not allow UNGEGN to be overridden by discussions of political issues such as individual maritime names.

This paper also refers to what else we could study under the agenda if the UNCSGN resolution II/34 is to be confirmed. If there is nothing more to discuss under item ‘Features beyond a Single Sovereignty’, we would like to propose to exclude this item, rather than redefining the resolution just to create issues to discuss under the agenda. We have other more relevant and important agendas to discuss under the new UNGEGN, and we should spare our valuable time for these other important technical agendas.

And back to very basics, it is related to the recognition of international reality. In the paper130, the ROK uses the expression “East Sea/Sea of Japan”, as if there were a dispute over the name of the Sea of Japan, which contradicts with the international reality. As I clearly mentioned on Monday, the only name which is internationally established for the sea area bordered by Japan, the Korean Peninsula and Russia is “Sea of Japan” and that name is officially used by the United Nations.

Finally, we would like to comment on the cases of dual naming in the maps of recent years that the distinguished delegate of the Republic of Korea mentioned on Monday. An increase of dual naming in recent years is the result of political lobby activities conducted by the Korean Government. It does not mean that those map publishing companies voluntarily accept dual naming from purely technical point of view on the basis of the judgement that the dual naming is internationally established in spite of the fact that the Sea of Japan is officially used by the United Nations.

So, we would like to ask for the understanding of the mission of the UNGEGN and the requirement by the Member Countries for the technical advancement in its agenda.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[2nd intervention]

Thank you for giving us the second chance to have a presentation. I shall be brief. But just listening very carefully to the points raised by the distinguished delegate of the Republic of Korea, on those points, we cannot agree at all. The time is quite limited and some of the points the delegate mentioned might need further research on a more very precise response, so we would like to take even more time to respond more in a comprehensive fashion.

But the point is that we do not feel the necessity to change our positions even regarding to the points raised by the Republic of Korea. Especially for the couple of points, the way of interpretation of the resolutions of IHO A.4.2.6 and others, the limitation of coverage is for the features both land and maritime, but if you read it very carefully, the interpretation leaves no room for further interpretation. And the case of, for example, English Channel and *la Manche*, does not apply to the high seas. The point is that not the maritime features, rather whether the work and the mandate would apply to the high seas. So, we understand that this has been the practice of the IHO and I am not certain whether this forum of the UNGEGN, a technical body, to discuss facilitation of the works of the land features, and whether it will be appropriate to discuss interpretation of IHO and so forth. So, the argument by the Republic of Korea regarding the dual naming on the basis of the UNCSCN resolution III/20 or IHO technical resolutions is completely unfounded. That's my conclusion.

And the last point approach to the mapping agencies. We take note of what the delegation mentioned, but there are couples of press reports about this case and we would like to keep an eye on this. The UN resolutions and UN practice regarding the Sea of Japan is the only officially used name. This is the undeniable fact and the reality we have to live with and we have to accept this. So, if I dropped some of the points I have to respond more precisely and more legally, I would like to ask for another chance in the coming days to come back.

Thank you.