

Agenda Item Number: items 4 (d) and 9 (a)
Agenda Item Title: 4 (d) National and international meetings and conferences and 9 (a) Promotion and capacity-building: Strengthening publicity and increasing awareness of the importance of standardized geographical names
Statement/intervention provided by: Republic of Korea
Statement/intervention:
<p>The delegation of the Republic of Korea fully respects and supports the work of UNGEGN which has played a crucial role in facilitating technical standardization and promoting international cooperation in the field of geographical names.</p> <p>The International Seminar on Sea Names referred to in the report submitted by the Republic of Korea with regard to the agenda item 4(d) has steadily evolved into a forum of international importance over the three decades, addressing a broad range of worldwide geographical naming issues from academic perspectives since its inception in 1995. In this respect, the delegation of the Republic of Korea finds it deeply regrettable that the Japanese delegation seeks to portray Korea's activities as merely political efforts aimed at countering the use of a particular geographical name. Also, the promotional materials related to agenda item 9(a) fall within the mandate of UNGEGN and are entirely consistent with its technical nature.</p> <p>Moreover, Japan seems to claim that "Sea of Japan" is "the only internationally established name," but the concept of "the only internationally established name" is without any legal or academic foundation. It is widely acknowledged that the name of a geographical feature shared by two or more states should be determined through consultation among the states concerned. This general naming principle is further affirmed by resolutions of both the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN).</p> <p>Contrary to the statement of Japan, "Sea of Japan" is not the only name that has been internationally recognized and used for the relevant area. While the UN Secretariat often uses the name "Sea of Japan" in documents it produces as a matter of practice, this does not in any way constitute an official position of the UN. Rather, it is merely an administrative practice employed for convenience in the absence of agreement among concerned parties. The UN Secretariat has clarified that "Sea of Japan" is not an authorized name and cannot</p>

be claimed as a standard geographic term for UN member states to employ. It is important to recall that diverse views on geographical names and inclusiveness have been officially raised and discussed within UNGEGN over the years.

In old maps describing East Asia, a variety of names were used for the waters between Korea and Japan since 17th century, including “East Sea,” “Korean Sea,” “Joseon (old name of Korea) Sea,” and “Oriental Sea.” It was only in the 19th century that the term “Sea of Japan” started to be recognized and used. In more recent practice, the name “East Sea” is already extensively used worldwide, and numerous electronic charts used by the world’s shipping industry have adopted this name. Contrary to the Japan's claim, the concurrent use of the names "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan" does not undermine the safety of international maritime traffic; it rather promotes accurate information and awareness across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, ultimately strengthening international maritime safety.

The delegation of the Republic of Korea respectfully emphasizes that Korea’s activities are aimed at promoting the accurate understanding of geographical names based on historical evidence and international standards. The Republic of Korea sincerely hopes that discussions on the standardization of geographical names will not be driven by unilateral interests of a particular country, but instead will embrace the diversity of cultural perspectives and historical realities. We trust that UNGEGN will continue to foster mutual respect and constructive dialogue among all Member States under these guiding principles. The Republic of Korea remains committed to engaging openly and responsibly as an active contributor to the ongoing work of geographical name standardization.