



## Economic and Social Council

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### **Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries  
and on the progress made in the standardization of  
geographical names since the Ninth Conference  
(for distribution only).**

### The Standardization of Geographical Names in Japan

Submitted by Japan\*\*

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\*\* Prepared by the Government of Japan

## **The Standardization of Geographical Names in Japan**

In Japan, geographical names are collected, arranged, and standardized by relevant governmental agencies to promote their administrative activities. As a consequent, the standardization of geographical names is a well-coordinated effort involving various related organizations which all have clearly defined tasks.

### **A. The efforts made by these organizations for standardization**

#### **1. Standardization of residential geographical names**

The names of administrative units of municipalities and their hierarchical details such as town divisions (cho), village divisions (oaza), and village blocks (aza), that is, residential geographical names, are regulated by law, and new names and their areas are published in official gazettes of the national and prefectural governments. Therefore, the areas, notations, and pronunciations of residential geographical names, as well as their names on maps, are standardized.

#### **2. Unification of geographical names of natural features**

In 1960 the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names was established to standardize geographical names by the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (GSI) which compiles maps of land areas, and the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard which compiles maps of mostly marine areas. Since then, the Committee meets once or twice a year.

#### **3. Adoption of geographical names of undersea features**

Undersea features discovered or surveyed by Japan's maritime survey organizations are given official names by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard, based on the recommendations of the Japanese Committee on Undersea Feature Names, which consists of academic experts and members of maritime survey institutes. In its deliberations, the Committee refers to "The standardization of undersea features", which was prepared jointly by the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Sub-committee on Undersea Features Names (SCUFN) and the Working Group on Names of Maritime and Undersea Features of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. As of July 2011, 1,219 undersea landforms, including in the Pacific Ocean and Japan Sea areas, had been given standardized names.

#### **4. Adoption of Antarctic geographical names**

With the exception of geographical features found in the region south of 60 degrees S that have either been named by other countries or used internationally, the topographical features discovered by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expeditions (JARE) and points of major geodetic or observational interest are tentatively named based on the "Code of Antarctic Geographical Naming (enacted by Headquarters of JARE)". These tentative names are submitted by the Antarctic Place-Names Committee of Japan to Headquarters of JARE, which decides on the official names. As of April 2012, 320 names had been officially approved and registered.

### **B. National Geographical Names Gazetteer**

In August 2007, the Japanese Government revised the previous (1997) edition of "Gazetteer of Japan" in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Since then, new information has been updated.

This gazetteer contains about 4,000 geographical names, which appear in 1:1,000,000-scale maps prepared by the GSI, as well as 1:1,000,000-scale bathymetric charts and 1:3,500,000-scale international charts prepared by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard.