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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

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Item 11 of the provisional agenda

WRITING SYSTEMS - PROPOSAL ON THE TRANSLITERATION
AND TRANSCRIPTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Submitted by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

1. It is recommended that geographical names in non-Roman alphabets or characters in all cases be transliterated into the Roman alphabet. This is felt to be in the best interests of international usage and scientific research. For the purpose of international understanding, it will be necessary for all countries to agree to the use of one standard transliteration system for converting the non-Roman alphabets or characters into the Roman alphabet. Further, it should be a transliteration system that is used not only for geographical names but also in all other fields. For this reason, the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) has adopted the transliteration system worked out by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which is now used in the fields of library science and technical research. (Compare: "Duden, Wörterbuch geographischer Namen", preface, pp. XXII-XXXI, for the applied transliteration-transcription systems.)

The German delegation feels that the development of various transliteration-systems should, if possible, be avoided for:

- (a) nationally or areally localized writing systems;
- (b) separate fields of science and technology.

In both cases, the purpose of a standard international transliteration system readily understandable and usable for all countries and research fields would be hampered by the creation of varying, localized transliteration systems.

Therefore, it is proposed that the Geneva Congress recommends the adoption of one standard international transliteration system for rendering of non-Roman alphabets and/or characters into the Roman alphabet; this to be based on the ISO transliteration system. Hereby, it would be advantageous to invite the ISO experts to attend the Geneva Congress.

2. In addition to transliteration, the necessity will remain of developing transcription systems for the various language areas. Such transcription systems would be meant for internal use within the various language areas. For the Federal Republic of Germany, the editorial staff of Duden^{1/} has been working together with philologists (Arabic, Slavic, etc.) on transcription keys for various writing systems. Up to the present, transcription keys have been set up for Arabic, Bulgarian, Greek (Ancient and Modern), Persian and Russian. Keys for other writing systems are presently being worked upon.

3. In cases of countries having an ideographic writing system (such as Chinese, Japanese), it is recommended to use the official conversion system into the Roman alphabet which is proposed by those countries. In Japan, for example, the romanization system based upon the Kunreisiki method.

Where, however, historically established name-forms differ from the now used officially adopted conversion system, duplication of names will have to be accepted for these language areas. This should be given with the historically older form appearing first; for example, in German: Hwangho, with Chinese transcription Huanghe; Peking with Chinese transcription Beijing.

^{1/} Duden is the officially approved spelling system for the German language used in all schools. In cases where proper spelling forms are in doubt, information is provided by the Duden editorial staff.