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Working Papers submitted by the Dutch-German Speaking Division

Ad Hoc Group of Experts on
the Standardization of
Geographical Names
New York, 2.-12.2.71

Working Paper

Working paper A
on the occasion of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Group
of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names
New York 2. - 12. 2. 1971

submitted by the Dutch-German Speaking Division

While the purpose and applicability of national standardization (of geographic names) are well known, some obscurity reigns over the tasks, possibilities, and objectives of international (geographic names) standardization. International standardization offers, on the one hand, a summation of the results of national standardizations, and on the other, recommendations concerning international transliteration. Beyond that, however, are some points of fundamental importance:

(1) Only those forms of (geographic) names which are written in the Latin alphabet can serve as internationally standardized forms. (Latin alphabet rule.)

(2) In this connection, of those nationally standardized indigenous names whose original alphabet is Latin, only those need be investigated whose foreign language conventional names [exonyms] are different.

(3) If the nationally standardized indigenous name is not originally from the Latin alphabet, this name for international use accords with a transliterated form, which is formed by means of an international romanization key.

(4) For each geographic object which has a conventional name as well as an indigenous one, the indigenous name is to be employed ~~whenever possible~~ in maps, statistics, time tables, etc published by international agencies or which serve exclusively international usage. In publications of international agencies

conventional names are to be used if it concerns the designation of larger, generally well-known objects and if the name has a fixed connection in terms of syntax with the context of the language of the publication (or refers to a title or the like in such a context). With regard to small, less well-known objects, it is recommended that even in publications of international agencies the indigenous names be used.

It is by no means intended that these recommendations should force conventional names out of use. On the contrary, they have their right to exist in all maps and texts which reach a broad user group within a given language area, especially school books, popular literature, belles-lettres, newspapers, etc.

Even where the use of a conventional name is warranted, the exact identification of the geographic object may require use of a double designation, i.e. conventional name / indigenous name.

Names are to be used in international publications in a form which has been transliterated in conformity with international transliteration keys. The use of popular romanization systems is to be left up to the judgement of the individual language associations.

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Working paper B
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When transferring names from a language using non-Roman script (language of origin) into Roman script, the official transcription of the country in which that language (language of origin) is used, should be adopted.

In cases where no such official transcription exists in the country in question, an international transcription applicable to all languages using Roman script should be used; recommended are the systems elaborated by ISO, as the competent international body. (Cf. Resolution of the 10th Congress on Onomastic Sciences, Vienna, Sept. 1969)

In cases where neither an official transcription of the country in question nor an ISO transcription exists for a language using non-Roman script, an internationally well established transcription as used by linguists should be adopted.

If a country makes official use of different transcriptions in different fields of application, International standardization of geographical names should adopt the transcription which is used in cartography, and if no transcription is used in cartography, the transcription which is linguistically the best.

The ad hoc Group of Experts should endeavour to induce the United Nations to seek a synchronisation of the official transcription of the countries in question and the corresponding ISO systems.

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Working paper C
on the occasion of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Group
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With reference to the suggestion made at the second meeting of the Ad-hoc Group of Experts in March 1970 concerning the production of official place name indexes of all countries with uniform form and content, the Dutch-German Division suggests the following: These place name indexes should be prepared and published by each country for its own sovereign area. With regard to format they should be uniform, and they should appear under a single title, perhaps "Nomina geographica", together with English and French subtitles. The numbering of volumes should also be according to one system. The content should be determined on the basis of the guiding principles of the Geneva Convention - U.N. Conference on the Standardization of Geographic Names, Geneva, 4-22 Sept. 1967, Vol. I, Report of the Conference, page 111.

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Working Paper

Working paper D

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The Dutch-German language Division considers documentation to be of great value to practical work. All pertinent institutions, commissions, and working committees which are concerned with national and international questions of standardization should report their results to the Cartographic Section. It is suggested that the Cartographic Section should publish an information bulletin, which would contain the reports and announcements.