

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
LIMITED
E/CONF.69/L.76
17 August 1977
ENGLISH ONLY



Third United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names
Athens, Greece
17 August - 7 September 1977
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DIVISIONAL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
ASIA, SOUTH-EAST DIVISION

Report for the
Third United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names,
Athens, Greece,
17th August to 7th September, 1977.

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UNITED NATIONS DIVISIONAL GROUP OF
EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
ASIA, SOUTH-EAST DIVISION

Presented by:

PAUL FOO
Director of National Mapping, Malaysia
(Divisional Representative of the
Asia, South-East Division)

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GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES,
ASIA, SOUTH-EAST DIVISION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the 7th United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East held in Tokyo in October, 1973, Malaysia was elected as the Divisional Representative for the United Nations Divisional Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Asia, South-East Division.

1.2 Malaysia therefore took over from Thailand, the previous Divisional Representative, the responsibility of convening regional meetings to enable Member States of this region to get together to discuss and to present their views so that a consolidated stand can be taken on problems concerning the standardization of Geographical Names.

2. FIRST MEETING OF THE ASIA, SOUTH-EAST DIVISION

2.1 The First Meeting of the Asia, South-East Division was convened in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 6th to 10th January, 1975.

2.2 This Meeting was attended by delegates from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

2.3 Burma, Khmer, Laos and the Republic of Vietnam were also invited but did not attend.

2.4 Map of South-East Asia

2.4.1 At this Meeting, it was agreed that the countries of this region should get together and publish a map of South-East Asia in which each member will be responsible for the correctness of the names shown for its country. This unique project would at the same time represent a concrete example of regional cooperation.

2.4.2 The Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia undertook the preparation and printing of the map.

2.4.3 A 3-colour edition of the map was produced in time for the Sixth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held in New York in March, 1975. Initially, five countries, viz: Indonesia, Khmer, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand participated in the Project in supplying the correct geographical names of places in their countries.

2.4.4 A full 9-colour version of the map with some modifications in its format was later prepared and published with two more countries participating, viz: Philippines and South Vietnam. Burma and Laos were also invited to participate in the project but there was no response from these countries.

2.5 Paper on the work of the United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names

2.5.1 At the request of the Meeting and for the benefit of the members of the region, Maj. Gen. Banlang Khamasundara of Thailand was requested to prepare a Paper on the history, aims, objectives, conclusions, recommendations and other matters connected with the work done so far by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

2.5.2 The Paper was subsequently prepared by Maj. Gen. Banlang Khamasundara of Thailand, edited by Mr. Paul Foo of Malaysia and printed by the Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia.

2.5.3 Each member of the region was supplied with 20 copies for distribution if they wish, to their country's Government Departments, Ministries and other Agencies.

3. SIXTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

3.1 This was held in New York from 5th to 26th March, 1975.

3.2 The Asia, South-East Division was represented by three members,
viz:

(i) Mr. Kok Swee Tuck of Malaysia as the Divisional
Representative

(ii) Maj. Gen. Banlang Khamasundara of Thailand

(iii) Col. Bunserm Narmwang of Thailand

3.3 The proceedings of the Sixth Session was reported on by Mr. Kok Swee Tuck at the 2nd Meeting of the Asia, South-East Division in Jakarta in September, 1975.

3.4 Regarding the proposed training course in Toponymy, which was to be sponsored by the Netherlands Government, members of the Asia, South-East Division were at first excluded from participation, but at the expressed persuasion of Mr. Kok, the Session subsequently agreed that the course should also be opened to the English speaking countries of the Asia, South-East Division.

4. SECOND MEETING OF THE ASIA, SOUTH- EAST DIVISION

4.1 This was held in Jakarta from 25th to 29th September, 1975.

4.2 Delegates from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand attended the Meeting. Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam were also invited but did not attend.

4.3 Course in Toponymy

In view of the importance of Toponymy, it was proposed that a course should be organised specifically for the countries of the Asia, South-East Division to be held in a country in the Division.

4.4 Concise Gazetteer

It was agreed to prepare a Concise Gazetteer of the region based

on the Map of South-East Asia. The Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia will undertake the preparation and compilation of this Gazetteer.

4.5 Regional Gazetteer

It was decided that the countries of this region get together and produce a Regional Gazetteer. This will consist of all names appearing within 30 kilometres on either side of a common international land boundary. The Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia will also undertake to compile this Gazetteer.

4.6 Physical Edition of the Map of South-East Asia

At this Meeting, it was also proposed to produce a Physical Edition of the Map of South-East Asia which will show physical features, including marine and sub-marine features. The Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia will undertake the preparation and printing of the map.

4.7 Working Group of the Asia, South-East Division

It was agreed to set up a Working Group to be represented by members of this region. This Working Group would meet regularly to discuss and deal with all the technical problems connected with the work of the United Nations Divisional Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Asia, South-East Division.

5. FIRST MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

5.1 The First Meeting of the Working Group was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 14th to 19th April, 1976.

5.2 At this Meeting, technical details were discussed and agreed upon in connection with the compilation and production of the Physical Map of South-East Asia.

5.3 Technical details for the production and publication of the Concise Gazetteer and the Regional Gazetteer were also discussed and agreed upon. Formats for these two Gazetteers were also prepared and adopted.

5.4 The Meeting noted that nothing has been heard from the Netherlands Government regarding the course in Toponymy which was to have been sponsored by the Netherlands Government and was to have been held between 26th April and 22nd May, 1976. It was decided that Malaysia, as the Divisional Representative would write to Dr. Ormeling, the Chairman of the Working Group on Training Courses on Toponymy to enquire about the proposed Course and also to request for copies of syllabus, lecture notes, literature, etc. Malaysia has accordingly written to Dr. Ormeling.

6. THIRD MEETING OF THE ASIA, SOUTH-EAST DIVISION

6.1 The Third Meeting of the Group was held in Manila from 10th to 14th June, 1976.

6.2 Only four member countries of the region invited to the Meeting attended. They were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

6.3 Course in Toponymy

6.3.1 The Chief Delegate from Indonesia made an offer at the meeting that the proposed Course in Toponymy to be specifically held for the Asia, South-East Division could be held in Indonesia subject to the approval of the Indonesian Government.

6.3.2 It was also felt that for practical reasons the Course could be held in rotation in each of the countries of the region.

6.4 Regional Atlas

As a long term project, it was agreed that member countries of the region should get together to produce a Regional Atlas with particular emphasis on geographical names and toponymy.

Thailand was requested to put up the Specifications and format for the proposed atlas for distribution to member countries of the region.

6.5 Newsletter

In order to disseminate information on current activities of members of the Asia, South-East Division in regard to standardization of geographical names and other aspects of map-making, it was decided that a Newsletter which would be known as 'GEONAMES' be produced and circulated among member countries

The Philippines is to undertake the publication of the Newsletter based on news items sent by member countries from time to time.

6.6 Divisional Representative of the Asia, South-East Division

The Meeting agreed to recommend to the VIIIth Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East, that for the sake of continuity and in view of the fact that there were several on-going projects which are now under action, Malaysia is to continue to be the Divisional Representative.

7. FOURTH MEETING OF THE ASIA, SOUTH-EAST DIVISION

7.1 The Fourth Meeting of the Group was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 14th to 18th April, 1977.

7.2 The Meeting was attended by delegates from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

7.3 Map of South-East Asia (Political). The Third Edition of this map, prepared and printed by the Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia, was distributed to all delegates at this Meeting. It was decided that this map, although specially prepared for the purpose of showing geographical names, should be called "Political Map" in line with international and standard usage.

7.4 Map of South-East Asia (Physical, including Marine and Sub-Marine Features.)

7.4.1 The first edition in draft form of this map which was

prepared and printed by the Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia, was distributed to the delegates. Each member country was requested to study the draft map and to indicate any additions or amendments it may wish to make.

7.4.2 When symbols of marine and sub-marine features are required to be shown on the map, they would be in accordance with IHO specifications.

7.5 Concise Gazetteer

The Meeting was briefed on the various problems and difficulties that were encountered on the compilation of this Gazetteer. It was decided that all countries will review and compile a new list based on the third edition of the Political Map. All names appearing in this map are to be included in the list which will also give a description of the feature together with its geographic coordinates. For this purpose, as agreed in Bangkok in April 1976, if the feature is a point on the map, the geographic coordinates of the point would be shown, but if the feature is not a point on the map, then the geographic coordinates shown would refer approximately to the centre point of the name. It was agreed that when the same name has been allotted to two different features, e. g. municipality and island, both the names can appear on the listing but with the appropriate geographic description.

7.6 Regional Gazetteer

Malaysia had received lists from all member countries concerned. This Gazetteer is now under preparation by the Directorate of National Mapping, Malaysia.

7.7 Regional Atlas

At the Manila Meeting in June 1976, Thailand has agreed to put up the necessary specifications for the Regional Atlas. The Meeting decided that the specifications would include the following:

- (i) designation - types of maps to be shown;
- (ii) scale, projection and other geographical values;
- (iii) sheetlines, general format and number of pages;
- (iv) drawing specifications - number of colours, lettering, symbolization, marginal notes etc.;
- (v) size - easily handled book-dimensions.

7.8 Course in Toponymy

Indonesia has indicated that they will be sending two officials at her own expense to Holland to gather facts and information on courses in Toponymy. It was agreed that Malaysia as the Divisional Representative will write to the Secretary of the Cartographic Section of the United Nations to enquire about the provision of funds to obtain the services of suitable lecturers. One of the sources of funds could be UNESCO.

7.9 Exonyms

The Meeting took note of the importance of resolutions

No. 28 and 29 made at the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in London in 1972 and decided that each member country should compile a list of exonyms used in their country and send it to the Divisional Representative to be compiled into a publication for distribution to other member countries.

7.10 Names of Features Lying Beyond a Single Sovereignty

For the time being, where more than one name exist for such features, those names would be shown on the maps and gazetteers. Each member country is requested to prepare a list of such names for discussion in due course with a view to standardization.

7.11 Non-participating Member Countries

The Meeting expressed the hope that Burma, Kambochea, Laos and Vietnam will participate in and support the activities of this Division by attending future meetings. It was also hoped that Singapore which had participated in the first and second meetings would continue to support the work of this Divisional Group by attending future Meetings for the benefit of the region and to further the cause of mutual understanding and cooperation.

Although they had been unable to attend this Meeting, it was agreed to continue the past practice of sending them copies of Reports of all Meetings for their information. In addition, copies of the GEONAMES would be sent to them by the Divisional Representative.

It was also noted that even though Laos and Vietnam did

not attend the Divisional Group Meetings, they nevertheless did submit geographical names of their countries for inclusion into the South-East Asia Map.

8. DIVISIONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ASIA, SOUTH-EAST DIVISION

At the Third Meeting of the Asia, South-East Division held in Manila from 10th to 14th June, 1976 it was agreed to recommend to the 8th Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East, to be held in Bangkok from 17th to 28th January, 1977, that for the sake of continuity and in view of the fact that there were several on-going projects which are now under action, Malaysia was to continue as the Divisional Representative. Malaysia therefore continues to be the Divisional Representative accordingly.
