

**Group of Experts on
Geographical Names
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WORKING PAPER

No.6

Agenda item 5

REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

**Report of the Fourth regional meeting of South-West Asia
Division**

(Islamic Republic of Iran)

Report of the Fourth Regional Meeting
of S.W. Asia Division - United Nations Conference
for the Standardization of Geographical Names

INTRODUCTION

Upon invitation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the fourth regional meeting of S.W. Asia Division was held in Tehran between January 7th. to January 9th. 1991, in the premises of the Geographical Organization of the Armed Forces (formerly known as National Geographical Organization).

The inauguration ceremonies took place at 9. a.m. on 7th Jan. in the main reception hall of the officers' club at the above mentioned organization.

A large number of high grade army officers, university professors, representative of cartographical and geographical institutes and members of the Iranian Names and Geographical Terminology Board were present. The Director of the Geographical Organization welcomed the participants in the meeting and other invited guests. He then gave an outline of history and activities of the Geographical Organization, and the part that the organization had in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Islamic Republic of Iran after its eight years war. The main speaker at the inaugural ceremonies was engineer Ali Akbar Torkan, Minister of Defence, who also welcomed the participants. Mr. Turkan then made brief statements on the various phases of development of human civilization and concluded his statements by emphasizing the rôle of informations ⁱⁿ present world community. He pointed out that geographical names whether appears on maps or in the newspapers and other mass media were an important means of communication and therefore deserved every attention. He referred to the project implemented some quarter of a century ago by the U.N. in connection with the standardization of geographical names throughout the world and emphasized the importance of the work of the Fourth Meeting in promotion of the United Nations aims and objectives. He concluded his statements by wishing the participants success in their deliberations.

PARTICIPANTS

The S.W.Asia Division of the United Nations Conference for Standardization of Geographical Names include all countries of the area excluding the Arabic Speaking Countries. The Division covers Farsi and urdu speaking countries as well as those that use farsi script in their maps. Normally it includes Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan but at the Fourth Regional Meeting delegates from - USSR and particularly Farsi speaking Republic of Tajikestan were also invited. This invitation was received favourably and delegates from the USSR and Tajikestan participated as observers. The meeting expressed hope that, in future, the observer delegate will attend as active members. A detailed list of participants is attached here to as appendix No. 1 .

LANGUAGE OF THE MEETING

In view of the fact that the majority of participants comprehended Farsi, it was originally envisaged that all business of the meeting be conducted in Farsi. However, upon request of one delegate who apparently was not a master of Farsi language, it was agreed that English be the official language. Consequently most of the business was conducted in English, although Farsi had to be inevitably used on certain occasions.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The meeting had altogether 10 business sessions. Dr. Mohammad Hassan Ganji, Professor Emeritus (Geography) of Tehran University and presently acting as geographical advisor to the Director of the Organization was in the chair - throughout the sessions. The first three sessions were devoted to the approval of the agenda and submission and discussion of the national reports. Dr. Ganji submitted a fairly long report which dealt partly with a brief history of the divisional activities and partly with what was done in the Islamic Republic of Iran after the termination of war with Iraq. The delegates of Pakistan and - Afghanistan submitted brief written and verbal reports respectively. The remaining sessions of the meeting were almost exclusively assigned to the discussion of transliteration systems in use in member countries. Needless to say that the main aim of the meeting was to come up with a system as simplified

as possible, both in respect of alphabetical length and common usage, in all countries concerned. No time was lost on the discussion of alphabetical signs that were exclusive to any one country. Therefore most of the discussions, - that sometimes turned to be arguments, were centred on the signs that had a common usage. In the course of the discussions several proposals were submitted by Dr. Mostafa Moqarrabi, Iranian Linguist and philologist. These proposals - could not be accepted by delegates from Pakistan and Afghanistan before consulting their home authorities. The delegate from Pakistan, in particular, - argued that alteration of a well - established system of transliteration with which all map - users have become familiar without any difficulty or confusion will not be practicable. He added that introduction of new signs will therefore not serve the purpose of this meeting. He made proposals that are attached - hereto along with Dr. Moqarrabi's remarks as annex No. 3 . The delegates were requested to take the proposals back to their respective offices and have them put to discussion. They were further requested to let Dr. Ganji know if their countries approved of the proposed changes in due course so that they may be included in the final report that is to be submitted at the coming session of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical - Names. A complete list of approved systems duly signed by all delegates is - attached hereto as annex No. 2 .

HOSPITALITY

The director and officers of the Geographical Organization showed warm - hospitality during the entire stay of the delegates in Tehran.

Visits were arranged for the participants to enable them to see places of interest such as the magnificent tomb and musoleum of the late Imam Khomeini.

RESOLUTIONS

In the course of its deliberations, the Fourth Meeting of the S.W.Asia - Division of the United Nations Conference for the Standardization of Geographical Names resolved that:

- 1- The meeting appreciated with much gratitude, the invitation and hospita-

lities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the formation of the present meeting in Tehran,

- 2- In view of the tremendous importance of geographical names both as a mean of communicating information and widening the scope of general knowledge of the society and, as a factor in economic developments, all countries of the region should continue to collect, process, register and propagate, geographical names as called for by the guidelines provided by the United Nations Group of experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names,
- 3- The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the United Nations Group of Experts for the Standardization ^{of} Geographical Names, being the sole link between the countries of the division and the body in question, should prepare comprehensive report about progresses made in the region, to be submitted to the future session of the UNGESCN and the fourth coming Sixth. UNCSGN,
- 4- To enable the above representative to prepare his comprehensive report, all delegates present at the fourth meeting are required to send to him their national progress reports within the next six months.

Tehran Jan -9- 1990