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**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda**

**Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to  
the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation**

**Institutional Frameworks for Managing Geographical Names  
in the Republic of Korea \***

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# **Institutional Frameworks for Managing Geographical Names in the Republic of Korea<sup>†</sup>**

## **SUMMARY**

The paper reports two recent developments in the institutional frameworks of the Republic of Korea, with regards to its activities for managing geographical names. First, as a comprehensive and systematic legal framework, the *Act on Geographical Names* is now in the process of legislation and waiting for final approval by the National Assembly. The act encompasses general principles of standardizing geographical names and relevant procedures, measures and organizations for names management. Second, the second edition of the *Guidelines for the Standardization of Geographical Names* was published. This guideline, generally intended to be used by local municipalities in their work on geographical names, contains more detailed principles of the standardization and procedures of proposing and processing new or replacing names.

There were two recent developments in the institutional frameworks of the Republic of Korea, with regards to its activities for managing geographical names. One is legislating the *Act on Geographical Names*(지명법); and the other is publishing *Guidelines for the Standardization of Geographical Names*(지명표준화편람).

### **Act on Geographical Names**

Despite growing interest on geographical notation both at the local and the national levels, a comprehensive and systematic legal framework for managing geographical names has been lacking in the Republic of Korea. Governmental activities on geographical names have been backed up individually by 71 related acts. The *Act on Land Survey, Waterway Survey and Cadastral Records* has provided major legal background, but even this act does not regulate the scope of names to be managed and principles and procedures of the standardization.

Major contents of the Act include the following;

- ◆ general principles of standardizing geographical names;
- ◆ procedures of standardization, e.g. proposing a name to the head of the local municipality, approval of upper level geographical names committees, and official announcement by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport;
- ◆ establishment of a national-level management plan for geographical names;

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<sup>†</sup> This working paper pertains to the UNCSGN resolutions I/4 (National standardization), V/6 (Promotion of national and international geographical names standardization programmes) and VIII/2 (Commemorative naming practices for geographical features).

- ♦ measures of geographical names management, e.g. survey on names, establishment of gazetteers and databases, research and development on geographical names; and
- ♦ establishment of geographical names committees at the national, regional and local levels.

Initiated by the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII), the Act has now been submitted to the National Assembly and is waiting for a final approval to be confirmed.

### **Guidelines for the Standardization of Geographical Names**

The second edition of the *Guidelines for the Standardization of Geographical Names* was published by NGII in October 2012, which replaces its first edition published in 2005. In order to meet its major purpose, which is to give directions to local municipalities in their work on geographical names, it provides detailed principles of the standardization and procedures of proposing and processing new or replacing names. This book, however, also carries out the function of tutorials on the concept, definition and typology of geographical names, necessity of geographical names standardization and domestic and international bodies of the standardization, history of managing geographical names in Korea, and the romanization of Korean.

Seventeen basic principles of standardizing geographical names are regulated in three stages of naming, perceiving and using, and managing and changing. Valid references were provided in the relevant UNCSGN resolutions, e.g. I/4 (C. Principles of office treatment of geographical names), VIII/2 (Commemorative naming practices for geographical features).

The following principles deserve noting:

- ♦ Higher priority shall be given to names
  - A. in local usage,
  - B. with simple and convenient form to users,
  - C. officially approved and used, and
  - D. with symbolic and historical meanings.
- ♦ Names which shall be avoided are those
  - A. in temporary use,
  - B. with hybrid form and unknown etymology, and
  - C. of living persons (The name of a historical person may be used some time after death).
- ♦ Change of names shall be avoided in principle, unless specific reasons of change or abolition are found. When a change takes place, strict procedures shall be applied.
- ♦ Change of contested names between regions or religious groups, and of names for boundary features shall be taken into careful consideration.
- ♦ Changes shall be actively considered for names
  - A. given with unreasonable procedure in the past,
  - B. with derogatory or disgusting meaning,
  - C. of which its feature is changed in shape or substance, and
  - D. which are difficult to speak or write.

Subsequent to these guidelines, NGII has prepared more detailed guidelines for managing names of individual types of geographical features. Already finished and in use are names of reservoirs, which have been brought to attention under several civil complaints. Upcoming will be guidelines for mountain and river/stream names. Guidelines are under preparation for other types of geographical names, according to the prioritized list of geographical features.