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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

Paper prepared by the Government of Costa Rica

REPORT ON WORK RELATING TO GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN COSTA RICA

Costa Rican Committee on Nomenclature

By Executive Decree No. 161-C of 15 October 1971, the following members were appointed to the Costa Rican Committee on Nomenclature, which had been established by Act No. 3535 of August 1965: Mr. Enrique Soto Borbón, representing the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports; Professor Rafael Obregón Loría, representing the University of Costa Rica; Mr. Carlos Aguilar Piedra, representing the Academy of Geography and History; Mr. Ricardo Fernández Peralta, representing the Board of Trustees of the National Museum; and Mr. Eduardo Protti Martinelli, representing the National Geographical Institute. Our own representative, Mr. Protti, was appointed Secretary of the Committee, having been nominated by the Deputy Minister of Transport. Substantial progress was made at the Committee's four meetings. One of the achievements of the Committee was the unprecedented conclusion of the necessary agreements for designating, by Executive Decree, 11 administrative districts, established by the National Commission on the Designation of Territorial Units, under the following names: Magote, Sámara, Carrandi, Guaycara, Mayorga, Nacascolo, Curubandé, Cereceda, Cutris, Pará and Tures. This has the effect of simplifying the names used, preserving the indigenous character of the areas in question and perpetuating the memory of famous Costa Rican Indians and citizens. The most important effect of the measure, from the toponymic point of view, is that it marks the beginning of a period of review of identical names, thereby complying with resolutions adopted at meetings and conferences on geographical names. In addition steps are being taken in conjunction with the Legal Department of the Ministry to prepare a draft decree embodying regulations under the Act by which this Committee was established and amplifying its provisions to enable the Committee to assume real authority for geographical names in Costa Rica, thus

making it possible for it to review and standardize our chaotic nomenclature with its heavy emphasis on the names of saints, most of which are used many times over.

Geographical names

The Chief of the Designation of Territorial Units Section, Mr. Eduardo Protti, is responsible for the compilation of Indexes of Geographical Names. Since studies on problems in that sphere take up much of his time, he has been assigned subordinate personnel with university qualifications, who are actively engaged in work on geographical names. The texts on insunimia and lithonymy, containing a total of approximately 900 toponyms, are now ready for publication. The texts on oronymy, hydronymy and inhabited places are also expected to be completed shortly. These publications will contain the following information: toponym, feature, geographical position, geodesic co-ordinates and basic map; and, where appropriate, altitude, area and politico-administrative unit. The Index of Inhabited Places was left until last because, in view of the extremely dynamic nature of the process of designating territorial units in Costa Rica, we are having to operate on the basis of Act No. 4865 of October 1971, which provides that no changes may be made in existing territorial units between 1 January 1972 and 31 December 1973; consequently, no new administrative units can be established in Costa Rica during that period. The political and administrative classification of inhabited places will thus be stabilized, thereby creating a very favourable situation for census and electoral purposes. It will also facilitate the geographical, economic and social studies now being undertaken in Costa Rica by such bodies as the National Geographical Institute, the Land Survey Department, the Office of National Planning, the University of Costa Rica, the Municipal Development and Assistance Institute, and specialized government departments.

In the execution of this project, use is being made of the toponymic information contained in our basic maps, the information furnished by field collectors and the information obtained by census-takers of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the Statistics and Census Department, both of which have numerous auxiliary personnel throughout the country. This toponymic documentation will be of great assistance to persons interested in geographical names for various purposes. For our own part, we regard this codification of geographical names as extremely important, especially since it will form the basis for the compilation of our provisional Geographical Dictionary.

Geographical Dictionary of Costa Rica

We have engaged the services of Mr. Pedro Ugalde Arce, who has a high-school certificate in geography and history and has successfully completed courses leading to a bachelor's degree in geography, to compile information on all subjects related to geography, with a view to accelerating work on, and ensuring the speedy completion of, our provisional Geographical Dictionary. A "Vocabulary" has already been compiled and we hope to publish it shortly, subject to the report of the Committee on Nomenclature, and to declare it official in order that it may be of use to publishers of geographical texts and publications now being prepared in Costa Rica.

It will thus be noted that we have made substantial progress in this sphere, and we hope to carry out the proposed programme successfully. The fact that the programme is being undertaken at all is due in large measure to the enthusiastic and unselfish spirit of co-operation which you, like the good teacher you are, have always displayed in your work with us. We hope that we shall continue to have the honour of receiving your intellectual support.
