



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

25 June 2007

Original: English

**Ninth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 21 - 30 August 2007

Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

**Economic and social benefits of the national and
international standardization of geographical names**

**The Introduction of the Master Plan for Protection Project of
China Geographical Names Cultural Heritage**

Submitted by China**

* E/CONF.98/1

** Prepared by Liu Baoquan, director, China Institute of Toponymy.

The Introduction of the Master Plan for Protection Project of China Geographical Names Cultural Heritage

Submitted by China

Prepared by Liu Baoquan, director, China Institute of Toponymy

Summary

China division initiated the Project of Protecting China Geographical Names Cultural Heritage in 2004, and has begun to compile *the Master Plan for Protection Project of China Geographical Names Cultural Heritage* from early 2007. The plan, over 300,000 words, comprises six main parts, such as guidelines, objectives and principles, etc.

As a country with a long history and large population, China has 56 races that use more than 80 spoken languages and about 30 written languages. The quantity of the geographical names is great. Most of them rich in cultural meanings. To carry out resolutions on protection of geographical names cultural heritage adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Name, China division initiated the Project of Protecting China Geographical Names Cultural Heritage in 2004. Based on three years' extensive investigation and experiences in some areas, experts from the field of history, geography, linguistics, geodesy and cartography have been convened to compile *the Master Plan for Protection Project of China Geographical Names Cultural Heritage* from early 2007. The planning manuscript, which comprises over 300,000 words, has been amended twice so far. The six main parts of the planning as follows:

1. Introduction of China geographical names cultural heritage

This part starts with geographical names' social characteristic. The cultural meaning of the geographical names is revealed by the discourse of the dual relationship between history and culture, culture and geographical names. It is pointed out in this part: a. Geographical names not only indicate directions, carry a mass of cultural information. b. Geographical names culture can be divided into two levels named linguistic culture and geographic feature culture. c. Ancient geographical names are the witness of the national history and the fossil of the traditional culture. d. According to the theory of the world cultural heritage, geographical names are not only a part of the national cultural heritage, but also a part of the world's cultural heritages.

2. Basic situation of China geographical names cultural heritage

China is a multiracial country. All nationalities create Chinese history and culture in common in a long history. China geographical names culture has its own features. The characteristics, classification, quantity distribution and the regional feature are introduced in this part.

3. Guidelines, objectives and principles on the protection of China geographical names cultural heritage

Based on the basic situation of the China geographical names cultural heritage, we put forward the guidelines, objectives and five protection principles in this part. The main five protection principles are integrating focus with general, part with whole, protection with succession, practice with research and propaganda with education.

4. Evaluation standard system of China geographical names cultural heritage

According to the classifications, essential characteristics and protection principles of the China geographical names cultural heritage, in this part we put forward the criteria for qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. Criterion for qualitative analysis is used in classification of cultural heritage. Criterion for quantitative analysis is used in identification whether a geographical name belongs to the key protection object.

5. The first batch of key protection species of China geographical names cultural heritage

According to evaluation criteria for geographical names cultural heritage, geographical names that should be protected were selected from ancient geographical names. Some of these geographical names should be propagated foremost, such as 100 geographical names of the ancient counties of thousand years' history, 100 geographical names of the Chinese ancient capitals, 100 geographical names of Chinese ancient villages, 100 geographical names of the Chinese ancient buildings and 100 geographical names of the famous rivers and mountains.

6. Propaganda, protection and guarantee measure of China geographical names cultural heritage

Based on the experiences for these years, some books such as *the Lists of Geographical Names Under Special State Protection*, *Records of the China Geographical Names Cultural heritage* (five volumes) and other large-scale picture albums for propaganda are plan to be compiled and published. Some maxi-series documentary TV plays such as *an ancient County of Thousand Years' History*, *the Chinese Ancient Capital*, *Chinese Ancient Village*, *the Chinese Ancient Building* and *The Famous Rivers and Mountains* are planed to be produced. Websites on geographical names culture will be established. Geographical names culture museum and forest of tablet will be built. Calligraphy and painting exhibition will be held, etc. Government should play a leading role and the society should participate actively in the project. The responsibility should be clear. The resultant force should be formed. A reasonable economy and law environment is necessary.

The Master Plan for Protection Project of China Geographical Names Cultural Heritage is easy to carry out because it is based on experiences for three years and scientific theories, and it conforms to China's realities. Of the whole planning, the work to protect geographical names of the ancient county of thousand years' history is going forward well. Experts convened by the China division have confirmed the geographical names of 35 counties as the name of the ancient

county of thousand years' history and awarded memento signs to them. There are 30 series of a maxi-series documentary TV play named *An Ancient County of Thousand Years' History* have been produced. It is a good start to propagate and protect Geographical Names cultural heritage and it is welcomed by the government and the society. At the same time, the protection of geographical names of bystreets in Beijing has made progress. The government of Beijing designs to make a law on renaming of geographical names of bystreets in Beijing. To satiate people's interest on geographical names of bystreets during the Olympic Games in Beijing, we are compiling and publishing materials of geographical names culture about Beijing's bystreets. Toponymists from all over the world are welcomed to visit Beijing at that time.

Inspired by the protection practice of geographical names cultural heritage, we think it helps to speed the process of standardization of geographical names, to keep the geographical names stable, to propagate and protect excellent traditional cultures of various nationalities in the world and to promote culture exchange. Therefore we suggest that United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names should provide better guidance for this work, promote academic exchange, compile *the Cultural Heritage List of Geographical names Under UN Special Protection* and establish special database. Experts from the China division will take an active part in the work and be willing to do its best.