

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**27 July 2012**

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

New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress  
made in the standardization of geographical names since the Ninth Conference  
(for distribution only).**

**National Report – Republic of the Philippines**

Submitted by the Republic of the Philippines\*\*

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\* E/CONF.101/1.

\*\* Prepared by the Republic of the Philippines

**Report of the  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**

**to the**

**Tenth United Nations Conference  
on the Standardization of Geographical Names  
New York, 31 July to 9 August 2012**

## **Summary**

This report describes the various activities being implemented by different agencies of the Philippine Government in relation to the standardization of geographical names. While at present there is no single government body that oversees the administration of geographical names in the country, some government agencies and interagency working groups implement complementary programs on geographical names.

The Philippine Standard Geographic Code (PSGC) is a systematic classification and coding of geographical-political subdivisions such as the administrative region, province, city/municipality and barangay. The PSGC is updated constantly to account for changes in the geographical-political subdivisions. On the other hand, the Local Government Code (LGC) of the Philippines prescribes the rules in naming local government units, public places, streets and structures. Guided by this code, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) issued detailed guidelines on naming and renaming of such features.

As the central mapping agency of the government, the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) has in the past two years been aggressive in implementing at least three projects that aim to collect, organize and make geospatial information more accessible to all types and levels of users. It is presently working on a nationwide inventory of islands and other geographical features, build-up of a national topographic database and establishment of a national geoportal.

## **Historical Background**

Since the 1900s, the task of establishing a uniform geographical nomenclature for the Philippines has been the responsibility of the Philippine Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN). The PCGN's work consisted mainly of resolving issues concerning geographical names. Executive orders constituting and reconstituting the PCGN were issued in the years 1917, 1933, 1939, and 1951. However, in 1973, a major revamp of the executive branch of the government was carried out, adversely affecting the agencies comprising the PCGN. Since then, the PCGN was deactivated, though a number of agencies continued to work on the standardization of geographical names.

Two editions of the Gazetteer of the Philippines were published by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey and the United States Defense Mapping Agency in 1945 and 1989, respectively. The 1989 edition was derived from 1:250,000 topographic base maps, PSGC and official census and statistics, and has the approval of the United States Board on Geographic Names.

The Philippines' Office of Census and Statistics published two volumes on geographical names, namely: Volume I – Philippine Geographical Names of Political Subdivisions, and Volume II – Philippine Geographical Names of Topographical and Hydrographical Features. The geographical names and features presented in both volumes have reference to place names existing on June 30, 1964.

Updating of the Philippine Gazetteer was performed mainly by the former Bureau of Coast and Geodetic Survey, now the NAMRIA. However, it was done mainly for internal use particularly for topographic mapping and nautical charting purposes. More comprehensive versions are being prepared in connection with the topographic databasing project, which is discussed in the latter part of this report.

## **National Programs on Geographical Names**

### **1. The Philippine Standard Geographic Code**

The PSGC is a systematic classification and coding of geographic areas of the Philippines. It is based on the four well-established hierarchical levels of geographical-political subdivisions of the country such as the administrative region, the province, the municipality/city and the barangay. Aside from being an instrument of securing uniformity and comparability of various statistics relating to geographic areas, the PSGC has the following other uses:

- As a guide in national as well as local development planning
- As a comprehensive area frame in the conduct of censuses and sample surveys and market studies
- As a comprehensive list of local government units (LGUs) in the internal revenue allocation
- As basis in the establishment of election precincts/voting centers
- Establishment of databases
- Development of geographic information systems
- Updating of maps

The first PSGC was published in 1977 by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), and revised in 1996 by an interagency working group chaired by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB). Thereafter, the PSGC is periodically updated as

changes occur due to change in names and status, new creation, transfer, merger and abolition of geographical-political units.

Based from the PSGC as of March 31, 2012, the Philippines has 17 administrative regions, 80 provinces, 138 cities, 1,496 municipalities and 42,027 barangays.

## **2. Laws and Regulations Governing the Naming and Renaming of LGUs, Public Places, Streets and Public Structures**

Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of the Philippines, prescribes, among others, the rules in naming local government units, public places, streets and structures. Guided by this code, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) issued detailed guidelines on naming and renaming of such features.

The rules define the procedures in naming and renaming places and public structures, the different levels of authority, which features may or may not be renamed, the character of names, and the limitations in naming after persons. The rules put great emphasis on the importance of historical and cultural significance of the names and their contribution to the positive development of national pride.

## **3. Inventory of Islands**

Since 2010, a Task Group at NAMRIA has been conducting a comprehensive inventory of islands for the purpose of updating the topographic maps and nautical charts, as well as the Philippine Islands Database. The Task Group has completed the research on existing maps, charts, satellite imageries and official records, and came up with an inventory that far exceeds the previously published number of islands. The group's next step is to validate on the ground those features that are of doubtful classification, and work on the documentation of small islands which are still unnamed in topographic maps and nautical charts.

## **4. Topographic Database**

The NAMRIA, as part of its topographic mapping function, also embarked on the development of a national topographic database in GIS environment. At 1:50,000 and 1:10,000 accuracy levels, the database contains detailed mapping features showing hydrography, contours and spot elevations, vegetation, road network, building footprints and administrative boundaries. The attribute information include feature properties such as geographical names (geographical-political units, streets, mountains, rivers, lakes, creeks, bays, coves, etc.), names of schools, hospitals and other prominent buildings, road width, type and surface, and other information.

The mapping features are derived from aerial photographs and very high resolution satellite imageries. The attribute information are field-validated in coordination with LGUs and other government authorities.

The topographic database is intended to update, in electronic form and on a map sheet basis, the 1989 Gazetteer of the Philippines.

## **5. The Philippine Geoportal Project**

Under the concept of One Nation, One Map, the NAMRIA rolled out this year a three-year, multi-agency effort of establishing a national geoportal that will hold and serve to the participating stakeholders all base maps that NAMRIA produces and eventually all fundamental and thematic datasets of the other data-producing agencies. Generally, the project intends to:

- establish a spatial data infrastructure that provides and integrates geographically-referenced data generated by various government agencies/offices, the academe and other organizations using one standard base map;
- provide a customer-friendly portal 24/7 web/online access to spatial data;
- provide an ICT platform for collaboration, data and resource sharing, integration, transparency and resource optimization; and
- formulate policies and standards for the data sharing, access, updates, security and pricing.

This year, the project would:

- develop a large scale framework map for Metro Manila that consists of the following layers of spatial information: ground control points, digital terrain model, orthorectified imagery, topographic line map consisting of roads, building footprints, surface hydrology, administrative and political boundaries.; and
- upload the resulting maps and associated attribute information onto the web.

The project has six components, namely: data, applications development, ICT infrastructure, training and capability building, policy framework and planning/institutionalization, and project management and system integration.

## **6. Participation in UNGEGN and Divisional Meetings**

The NAMRIA has carried on the Philippines' participation in UNGEGN and Divisional meetings of the Asia South East and Pacific South West Division (ASEPSW). It hosted the ASEPSW Divisional Meeting in Manila last 27 February 2012.

## **Issues and Recommendations**

Despite the progress made by the PSGC, the existing rules on naming of geographical units and features, and the efforts of NAMRIA to inventory, database and make the information more accessible, there remains a need to reconstitute a central committee that will oversee the administration of geographical names. This committee should address the policy and operational issues on the classification and naming of unnamed islands and other topographic features, cartographic representation of geographical names, monitoring of changes in geographical names, and other related issues.