

23 June 2017

Original: Russian

**11th United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 8 -17 August 2017

Item 5 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 10th Conference (for distribution only).**

Report of the Republic of Belarus

Submitted by the Republic of Belarus**

* E/CONF.105/1

** Prepared by Irina Borodich

REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

The Republic of Belarus is a unitary democratic social state located in Eastern Europe, bordering the Russian Federation, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.

The administrative and territorial structure is defined in the Law of the Republic of Belarus, dated May 5, 1998, “On the Administrative and Territorial Structure of the Republic of Belarus”, according to which the territory of Belarus is divided into the territory of the capital and the territory of provinces; the territory of a province is divided into territories of regions and towns of province subordination; the territory of a region is divided into territories of rural councils (including rural settlements), urban settlements and towns of regional subordination.

Activities in the Republic of Belarus in the field of names of geographical objects are carried out in accordance with the existing legislation for determination, standardization, assignment of names to geographical objects and their renaming, public accounting and use, as well as preservation of names of geographical objects as a constituent part of the historical and cultural heritage of the republic, which is regulated by the Law of the Republic of Belarus, dated November 16, 2010, “About names of geographical objects” (hereinafter referred to as “the Law”).

The Law has been elaborated by taking into account bilingualism constitutionally fixed in the republic (Belarusian and Russian have the status of official languages, at the same time the Belarusian language is the national language), as well as international experience of legal regulation in the field of names of geographical objects.

The Law establishes the powers of the President of the Republic of Belarus, public bodies and citizens in the field of names of geographical objects. It also determines requirements to names and the procedure of their assignment. The assignment of names to geographical objects relates to authorities of local governments. Conduct of a unified State policy in the field of names of geographical objects is imposed on the State Property Committee of the Republic of Belarus.

In accordance with the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Culture, dated July 20, 2016, place-names have been assigned a high status of non-material cultural values.

To standardize the works in the field of names of geographical objects the following technical statutory and regulatory legal enactments have been elaborated and brought into force:

- technical guidelines on translation of names of geographical objects from Belarusian into Russian;
- technical guidelines on translation of names of geographical objects from Russian into Belarusian;
- technical guidelines on translation of names of geographical objects from Belarusian and Russian into other languages;
- guidelines on the procedure of the public accounting of geographical objects names, development and maintenance of the State Catalogue of names of geographical objects in the Republic of Belarus;
- guidelines on the procedure of determination and normalization of names of geographical objects;
- guidelines on the procedure of determination, assignment of names to geographical objects outside the territory of the Republic of Belarus, discovered by Belarusian explorers, their renaming and use of their names;
- guidelines for transliteration of geographical names of the Republic of Belarus with Latin letters;
- technical code of the established practice “Geographical names: methods and rules of translation of geographical names and terms of the Republic of Poland into Belarusian”;

- technical code of the established practice “Geographical names: methods and rules of translation of geographical names and terms of Ukraine into Belarusian”;
- technical code of the established practice “Geographical names: methods and rules of translation of geographical names and terms of the Latvian Republic into Belarusian“;
- technical code of the established practice “Geographical names: methods and rules of translation of geographical names and terms of the Lithuanian Republic into Belarusian“;
- instructions on the procedure of address system maintenance.

Coordination of the work for formation of a single approach to names of geographical objects is provided by the Toponymic Commission under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter referred to as “the Toponymic Commission”), consisting of representatives of ministries, local councils, scientists of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, higher educational institutions, cartography specialists.

Main principles of activities of the Toponymic Commission include: legitimacy of determination, standardization, assignment of geographical objects names and their renaming, public accounting and use, accounting of general public interests, geographical, historical, natural, national, ethnographic, social, cultural and other conditions, as well as opinions of citizens; preservation of geographical objects names as a constituent part of the historical and cultural heritage of the Republic of Belarus.

Over the last 5 years the Toponymic Commission has approved 133 names of geographical objects; unified requirements, standards and rules have been worked out for assignment of names to components of the road network in honour of prominent state or public and political figures, workers artists, their accounting and usage; a list of standardized railway object of the republic in Belarusian and Russian has been approved.

The public accounting of geographical objects names in the republic is being carried out in the State Catalogues of names of geographical objects of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter referred to as “the State Catalogue”), which constitutes a public informational resource at Web-site <http://maps.by>. It contains information about names of existing and abolished geographical objects, and it makes it possible to trace the history of names, to identify geographical objects having the same name on the basis of any extra information, including administrative-territorial reference, geographical coordinates, and it includes the following sections:

- names of administrative-territorial and territorial units (provinces, regions, settlements);
- names of transport infrastructure objects (railway objects, airports and airfields);
- names of physical and geographical objects.
- As of May 1, 2017 the State Catalogue contained 36 459 names of geographical objects:
- 26 150 names of administrative-territorial and territorial units (including 1516 names of abolished geographical objects);
- 962 names of railway objects (including 7 objects ceased to exist);
- 8 names of airports and airfields (including 1 name of the abolished airport);
- 9 339 names of physical and geographical objects (including 10 abolished objects).

Names of geographical objects are taken into account in the State Catalogue in Belarusian and Russian, as well as by means of Latin letters in accordance with the national Romanization system approved at the 10th UN Conference for standardization of geographical names (2012).

The State Catalogue refers informational resources under continuous renew. Over the year 2016 and 4 months of the year 2017 the specialists, who are authorized to maintain the State Catalogue, have worked out 121 regulatory legal enactments (mostly, decision of local councils), being the basis of 501 amendments and additions to the State Catalogue:

- spelling of names of 325 geographical objects has been changed;
- 48 geographical objects have been abolished;
- categories of 31 geographical objects have been changed;
- administrative and territorial belonging of 96 geographical objects has been changed;
- 1 reference card has been worked out for a newly established geographical object.

On the basis of the data of the State Catalogue the section “Belarus” is annually renewed in the electronic informational bulletin of amended geographical names of CIS member-states, prepared by specialists of a group for geographical names in the Inter-State Council for Geodesy, Cartography and Earth Remote Sensing of CIS member-states.

The informational bulletin includes amended names of administrative-territorial and territorial units of the Republic of Belarus since 1997.

In 2012 the section “Belarus” in the informational bulletin featured 835 names. In 2013 11 positions were added, in 2014 – 15, in 2015 – 21, in 2016 – 12. As on January 1, 2017 this section in the informational bulletin included 894 names.

The informational bulletin is placed on Web-sites <http://maps.by>, <https://rosreestr.ru>, and a link to it is also given on web-site <http://gki.gov.by>.

Since 2012 normalization of names of road network components has been carried out in the Republic of Belarus to streamline these names in Belarusian and Russian. The names are brought into line with the requirements of the Instructions on the procedure of address system maintenance, as well as with orthographic rules in the Belarusian and Russian languages.

Names of road network components in the republic (by settlements) in both state languages are recorded in the Register of Addresses of the Republic of Belarus, which is accessible at the Web-site <http://nca.by>.

The use of data from the State Catalogue and the Register of Addresses of the Republic of Belarus is mandatory for public bodies, other organizations, natural persons, including individual entrepreneurs, who carry out their activities in the field of geographical objects names, including the cases of establishing other public informational resources and organization of interaction among them.

In 2015 normalization of names of public transport stopping points in Minsk was carried out. The normalization was aimed at reconciliation of stopping points names with street names, where they were located. In the process of this work 850 names for 1968 stopping points were normalized. Currently, normalization works are being planned for stopping points in Minsk province.

To ensure standardization in the field of geographical names of the world, as depicted in cartographic and other works, a Reference Book of names of states and territories of the world (hereinafter referred to as “the Reference Book”) was prepared in 2012 and printed in 2013, where unified spelling forms were established for names of states and territories of the world, their capitals and centres in the Belarusian, Russian and English languages, names of 194 independent states and 40 territories were given. The data base worked out by a group of UN experts for geographical names was used as the basis of spelling the names in Russian and English.

The Reference Book is intended for public bodies, other organizations and individual entrepreneurs carrying out cartographic activities.

During composing cartographic and other publications intended for the international use, during rendition of names of geographical objects with Latin letters the national Romanization system is applied in accordance with the Instructions for transliteration of geographical names in the Republic of Belarus with Latin letters.

By taking into account the international experience and with the aim of retention of the national forms of place-names, their phonetic identification the transliteration is carried out from the Belarusian form of spelling.

So, in 2014, within the frameworks of preparation for the Ice-Hockey World Championship in the Republic of Belarus the transliteration of spelling of road network components and subway stations in Minsk was carried out with the participation of specialists of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

Transliterated names are placed next to the names in the Belarusian language at informational traffic signage of the republic, in cities, Minsk subway. Also, they are used during elaboration of tourist maps and layouts.

Cartographic articles in the Republic of Belarus are issued on paper and electronic carriers mainly in Russian and Belarusian. The range of output products comprises more than 700 works of various thematic directions: general geographical and political-administrative maps and atlases of the Republic of Belarus; maps of cities (the capital, province and regional centres); atlases and maps of automobile roads (of the republic, adjacent countries); maps of the world, Europe, individual regions; tourist maps and atlases; maps of lakes and water storage basins of Belarus; historical atlases and maps; maps and atlases for children; educational cartographic works.

One of most important achievements in the field of cartography includes development of “the Big Historical Atlas of Belarus” in four volumes – this is the first republican original and the most complete cartographic edition dedicated to the historical past of the country.

Volume 1 – from the ancient time till the middle of the 16th century (in 1569 the lands of Belarus were included to the United Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), 248 pages, published in 2009.

Volume 2 – 1569–1795 (the third partition of the United Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), 352 pages, published in 2013.

Volume 3 – 1772–1795 (the period of Belarus lands inclusion to the Russian Empire) – February 1917, 352 pages, published in 2016.

Currently, volume 4 of the atlas is being prepared for publication, covering the period from February 2017 till present. Its publication is planned for 2018.

“The Big Historical Atlas of Belarus” was executed in the Belarusian language.

In 2016 “Teacher’s Geographic Atlas” was published – the first complex cartographic edition, which covers all required topics of the secondary school course of geography and includes more than 700 maps. Materials contained in “Teacher’s Geographic Atlas” are fully illustrative of natural peculiarities of the Earth, its population, ecology, contemporary state of world economy, culture, international relations. The atlas is, first of all, intended for teachers of secondary educational institutions, as well as for students. Meanwhile, the comprehensive description of regions of the world and the Republic of Belarus makes this manual useful for a wide circle of Belarusian and foreign readers.

“Teacher’s Geographic Atlas” was published in Russian.

Due attention is paid to the development of maps and atlases for children. So, in 2016 an atlas was published for preschool-age children “World around Us”, cartographic works are conducted for development of children’s maps “My Motherland Is Belarus” (foldable and wall-mounted options), “Vegetable and Animal World of the Earth”, “Architectural Sights of the World”, “Travelling throughout Minsk” (a foldable option); atlases for children “Countries and Costumes of the World” (along with stickers).

A special place is devoted to preparation and issue of educational cartographic works. Provision of educational institutions with cartographic products refers to the works of public importance, and in accordance with the legislation the preparation work for publication of educational cartographic production may only be fulfilled by the authorized company, which is represented by “Belcartography” Republican Unitary Enterprise.

These works are carried out in accordance with the Subject Schedule of preparation and issue of educational cartographic manuals for general secondary, special and higher educational institutions, to be annually approved by the State Property Committee of the Republic of Belarus jointly with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Belarus.

By 2015 “Belcartography” Republican Unitary Enterprise issued cartographic products for all topics of educational programs of general secondary educational institutions (from the 4th to the 11th forms).

In 2014 preparation was completed for the issue of 23 educational cartographic manuals for general secondary educational institutions, and 34 such cartographic manuals were issued.

In 2015 preparation was completed for the issue of 36 educational cartographic manuals for general secondary educational institutions, and 19 such cartographic manuals were issued.

In 2016 preparation was completed for the issue of 73 educational cartographic manuals for general secondary educational institutions, and 20 impressions of these cartographic manuals were printed.

Hereafter, the indicated cartographic products will be updated and reissued due to changes in curricula. Also, two electronic manuals on history of Belarus in the Belarusian language for school students have been prepared for issuing.

By taking into account the public bilingualism all new atlases and maps are executed in Belarusian and Russian, and those works, which were issued in one language, are already reissued in both languages. Of course, this fact improves quality of secondary education in Belarus.

Besides, “Belcartography” Republican Unitary Enterprise is carrying out its work for development of wall charts and maps for higher educational institutions.

In 2014 18 wall charts and maps were prepared for higher educational institutions and 11 charts and maps were issued.

In 2015 6 wall charts and maps were prepared for higher educational institutions and 11 charts and maps were issued.

In 2016 works were completed for design and execution of 5 impressions of cartographic manuals for higher educational institutions, and 12 manuals were printed for higher educational institutions.

Preparation of cartographic manuals for educational institutions is funded by the state.

Representatives of the Republic of Belarus participate in international events with the aim of study of international experience in the field of standardization of names of geographical objects, development, maintenance and practical application of national catalogues of geographical names, solution of the language problem in multilingual states, development of reference materials and gazetteers, determination of possible international cooperation in the field of geographical objects names.

Being a fully legitimate member of the Department of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), the Republic of Belarus participates in all meetings of the group within the frameworks of the Interstate Council for Geodesy, Cartography and Earth Remote Sensing of CIS member-states and delivers summary reports on the state of toponymy in Belarus.

By the invitation of the Chairman of the Baltic section of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) the Republic of Belarus participated at meetings of the group as the observer-state, as well as it delivered national reports.

In 2012 at the 15th meeting of the Baltic section of UNGEGN the report “Peculiarities of the national standardization of geographical names of the Republic of Belarus” was delivered for the participants.

In 2013 at the 16th meeting the State Catalogue of names of geographic objects in the Republic of Belarus was presented.

At the 17th meeting of the Baltic section of UNGEGN in 2015 the actual report “Normalization of road network names in the Republic of Belarus was presented”.

In 2016 at the 18th meeting representatives of the Republic of Belarus disclosed the prospects of Belarusian toponymy development.

By summarizing the aforesaid it can be pointed out that the standardized legal base and organizational structure have been provided in the Republic of Belarus for performance of works in the field of geographical objects names.

The prospects of Belarusian toponymy development seem to appear in normalization and harmonization of all existing names, filling in the State Catalogue, issue of reference and regulatory literature required for optimization of work by the bodies of state administration, legal entities and physical persons, including individual entrepreneurs, during fulfillment of the activities related to geographical names.