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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).**

### **Report of Russian Federation**

Submitted by Russian Federation\*\*

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\*\* Prepared by the Russian Federal Service of State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr)

## **Resume**

Legislative base for naming and renaming of geographical objects as well as for standardization, usage, registration, and storage of geographical names as a part of historical and cultural heritage was set by the Federal Law 152 'On names of geographical objects' passed on December 18, 1997 (hereinafter the Federal Law). In 2008, the Federal law 'On ratifying amendments to the Federal Law 'On names of geographical objects' was adopted. The amendments were introduced to detail the original law basic notions and purviews as well as to bring some of its assets into line with the legislation of the Russian Federation in force.

As a result of reorganization of the federal executive authorities, functions to develop the state policy and normative and legislative regulations for geodesy, cartography and geographical names were delegated to the Ministry of Economic Development. The Federal Service of State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr) was imposed with a responsibility to develop and maintain the State Catalogue (database) of Geographical Names, to standardize names of geographical objects in Russian, to examine proposals on naming and renaming of geographical objects, to provide international cooperation in the standardization of geographical names.

The report describes some trends in the national standardization of geographical names and progress achieved, mentions main map products issued in the period of report and gives some information on the use of GOST83 Romanization system approved by the Fifth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names for maps and atlases published for international circulation.

Some international meetings and projects devoted to geographical names attended by the Russian experts between 2007 and 2012 are listed.

## NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION

### **Legislation on naming of geographical objects and official authorities responsible for geographical names**

The legislation of the Russian Federation on naming of geographical objects is based on the Constitution of the Russian Federation and includes the Federal Law 152 'On names of geographical objects' passed on December 18, 1997 and some decrees and legal documents adopted to provide for the Law's implementation.

The Federal Law 'On names of geographical objects' sets legal foundations for naming and renaming of geographical objects as well as for standardization, use, registration, and storage of geographical names as a part of historical and cultural heritage of the peoples in the Russian Federation.

With a view to observe the Federal Law, the following governmental decrees were adopted:

- 'Issues related to implementation of the Federal Law 'On names of geographical objects' (1998);
- 'Measures for implementation of the Federal Law 'On names of geographical objects' (1999);
- 'On adoption of the Regulations for registration and inventory of geographical names, publication of gazetteers and references of geographical names and development and maintenance of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names' (2000).

In 2008, by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, functions to develop the state policy and normative and legislative regulations for geographical names were delegated to the Ministry of Economic Development.

By the Statute of the Federal Service of State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr) adopted by the Government of the Russian Federation on July 1, 2009, Rosreestr was determined as an executive federal authority in the field of geographical names.

Rosreestr was imposed with a responsibility to develop and maintain the State Catalogue (database) of Geographical Names, to standardize names of geographical objects in Russian, to examine proposals on naming and renaming of geographical objects, to provide international cooperation in the standardization of geographical names.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Federal Service of State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr) follow the legislation of the Russian Federation as well as resolutions and recommendations of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names and inform on them other agencies and authorities concerned.

## **National standardization of geographical names**

Between 2007 and 2012, certain results were achieved in the field of geographical names standardization, namely:

- some assets of the Federal Law ‘On names of geographical objects’ were refined;
- proposals on naming and renaming of geographical objects of the Russian Federation, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of Russia as well as of features discovered or determined by the Russian explorers in the World Ocean and Antarctica were examined;
- drafts of gazetteers, reference-books and registers of geographical names were coordinated;
- inquiries of federal and regional authorities, organizations, agencies, and general public were responded by providing them with information on geographical names and recommendations for their use.
- State Catalogue of Geographical Names was further developed and maintained and made available to users;
- agencies and organizations engaged in mapping and map editing were provided with the required data on geographical names;
- correct use of names of geographical objects was audited by the state authorities in charge.

### **Refinement of some assets in the Federal Law ‘On names of geographical objects’**

In 2008, in order to bring some assets in the Federal Law ‘On names of geographical objects’ into line with the legislation of the Russian Federation in force and to refine some of its notions and provisions, the Federal Law ‘On ratifying amendments to some legislative acts of the Russian Federation in order to better exercise the powers of the Government of the Russian Federation’ and the Federal Law ‘‘On ratifying amendments to the Federal Law ‘On names of geographical objects’ were passed.

At present, a new draft ‘On ratifying amendments to the Federal Law ‘On names of geographical objects’ is under consideration. It shall refine some regulations to exclude ambiguity in law enforcement and simplify a procedure of submitting proposals on naming and renaming of geographical objects.

In order to optimize financing of measures needed in connection with renaming of geographical objects, the draft provides for their financing by a renaming proposal initiator.

### **Update of normative documents and guidelines**

More than 100 normative instructions are used to render geographical names from languages of peoples of the Russian Federation and other countries into Russian language. In 2011, in the course of the planned update of these instructions, a code of the rules for Russian rendering of geographical names of the Republic of Bashkortostan was developed.

Development of the similar code of the rules for geographical names of the Republic of Tatarstan has started.

## **Examination of proposals on naming and renaming of geographical objects**

The Federal Service of State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr) keeps examining all submitted proposals on naming of new geographical objects and renaming of available ones. On average about 50 proposals on naming and renaming of populated places, administrative units, ports, mountains, harbors, undersea features railway stations and other objects are annually reviewed.

Drafts of new gazetteers and reference-books on administrative-territorial system of the Russian Federation subjects are also examined in terms of correct spelling, rendering and use of geographical names.

## **Development and maintenance of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names**

The State Catalogue of Geographical Names developed and maintained in pursuance of the Federal Law 'On names of geographical objects' is being populated with the collected and processed data so to provide:

- uniform and permanent use of geographical names in normative legal documents, official correspondence, maps, publications and by mass media;
- treatment of geographical names as a constituent of historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation;
- official information on geographical names and objects to the federal and regional government bodies of the Russian Federation, local administrations, agencies and organizations, mass media and civic community.

The State Catalogue of Geographical Names (hereinafter the State Catalogue) is developed as a permanently maintained, updated and enhanced computer database.

A geographical object registered in the State Catalogue is described by the following data items: name, generic term, administrative status (for a populated place), administrative-territorial reference, geo coordinates, sheet of 1: 100 000 map where the object is shown; geo reference (location of an object relative to other large objects) , available versions of name and generic terms, etc.

By January 1, 2012, 580 000 objects with the abovementioned data items were input into the database which makes up about 76% of the total design volume of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names. This year, the database of geographical names shall be populated up to 700 000 objects which will make up 93% of the total design volume. In 2013, the database populating shall be finalized in volume of 1:100 000 map.

Maintenance and updating of the database is a task of the State Catalogue development. These operations imply processing and input of official data on named and renamed geographical objects, on changed generic terms and administrative affiliations, as well as on abolished objects.

The data input into the State Catalogue are submitted to an approval of the government bodies in

appropriate subjects of the Russian Federation. To this end, registers (lists) of geographical names of specific administrative units and territories of the Russian Federation were compiled with the automated data retrieval system and sent to them for an approval. If any discrepancies between the data input into the State Catalogue and local use were revealed, they were analyzed and needed corrections made.

### **Information provided at inquiries of geographical names users**

Rosreestr annually reviews more than 250 inquiries received from authorities, organizations and citizens concerning geographical names, their use and official spelling.

The automated data retrieval system of the State Catalogue allows to process the data available in the Catalogue and efficiently compile and output to users the required information: name of a specific geographical object, its generic term, administrative status in case of a populated place, administrative affiliation, geographic coordinates, appropriate sheet of 1:100 000 map, available versions of the name and generic term. In addition, the automated data retrieval system makes it possible to pick up required data for the entire territory of the Russian Federation or its standalone subject and to compile and output data in different forms and on different media:

- registers (lists) of geographical names registered in the State Catalogue;
- alphabetic lists of geographical names by generic terms;
- alphabetic lists of geographical names of abolished objects by a specific date;
- lists of homonymous geographical names;
- alphabetic lists of geographical names assigned within a specified period of time;
- lists of geographical objects in an alphabetic order of their new or former names.

Since 2010, registers of geographical names by subjects of the Russian Federation have been posted on the official site of Rosreestr at the address [www.rosreest.ru](http://www.rosreest.ru). Currently, some technical details of providing an open access to the State Catalogue data on the portal of state services are investigated.

To meet informational needs of the Russian state authorities, the Bulletin of official changes of geographical names on the territory of the Russian Federation is compiled. By now, the Bulletin includes information on renaming of nearly 400 geographical objects and naming of more than 800 objects within the period between 1997 and 2011. The Bulletin is available on the official Rosreestr site ([www.rosreestr.ru](http://www.rosreestr.ru)) and is annually updated.

### **Romanization system**

On the maps intended for international circulation, the Romanization system for the Cyrillic characters GOST-83 approved by the Fifth UN Conference of the standardization of geographical names (Montreal, 1983) continues to be used.

### **State audit of geographical names use**

Regional agencies of Rosreestr audit correct use and spelling of geographical names in the regions of their jurisdiction:

- appropriate inquiries are sent to the regional authorities, local administrations, regional archives, federal state authorities, agencies and organizations to clarify revealed discrepancies concerning location of geographical objects, status of populated places, abolished populated places, submission of legal documents about naming of specific objects, correct display of boundaries, etc;

- revealed breaches in the field of geographical names (groundless replacement of geographical names, their distortion, etc.) are eliminated by making changes in appropriate legal documents of the Russian Federation subjects, revising cartographic production, complying with orders on administrative infringements.

The seminar ‘Improvement of the state control of geodetic and cartographic work under present-day conditions’ (April 2011, Moscow) was held to train staffers of regional Rosreestr agencies to treat geographical names.

### **Cartographic products**

In the period under consideration, rendering of geographical names of the Russian Federation and other countries for developing and publishing of maps and atlases was in progress.

Various kinds of subject maps and atlases, including those for schools, have been created recently.

The most significant publication is the ‘National Atlas of Russia’. This is a profound encyclopedic scientific and reference work that contains information on the state structure, nature, resources, population, economics, environment status, history and culture of Russia.

The ‘Atlas’ is issued in four volumes. Being a part of the National Atlas, each of its volumes is also a standalone cartographic work of its own informative and cognitive value.

In view of the target of the ‘National Atlas’ and a wide range of its users, it is released in both hard copy and electronic form.

Within the frames of the state project ‘Patriotic upbringing of the citizens of the Russian Federation for 2011-2015’ Rosreestr started development of five-volume atlas ‘Golden pages of Russian history’.

Production of state-of-the-art digital maps and plans as the state information resource most required by all categories of users is in progress. At present, the territory of the Russian Federation is covered with 1:100 000 digital maps by 99%, and with 1:50 000 digital maps by 95%. Digital maps at scale 1:25 000 were created for economically developed and densely populated regions of the Russian Federation in volume of about 30% of total number of all sheets for these regions. For 325 cities of the Russian Federation digital plans at scale 1:10 000 were produced.

These cartographic products actually support the state policy in the field of geographical names pursued in the Russian Federation.

Regional gazetteers and toponymic reference-books were issued by specialists and scientists from other organizations and agencies.

### **International cooperation**

In the period of 2007-2012, international cooperation was developed in the following directions:

- participation in the meetings held by the UN Group of Experts on geographical names;
- collaboration with the Working Group on Geographical Names of the CIS Member-states Council on Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Earth Remote Sensing.

During recent five years, the Russian experts attended:

- 25<sup>th</sup> (Nairobi, 2009) and 26<sup>th</sup> (Vienna, 2011 г.) sessions of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names;
- 8<sup>th</sup> (Sofia, 2008) and 9<sup>th</sup> (Belogradchik 2010) meetings of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names;
- 13<sup>th</sup> (Vilnius, 2009), 14<sup>th</sup> (Vienna, 2011) and 15<sup>th</sup> (Riga, 2012 г.) meetings of the Baltic Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names;
- 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group on Geographical Names of the CIS Member-states Council on Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Earth Remote Sensing (Minsk, 2010);
- 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Subcommittee on Names of Undersea Features and joint Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and International Hydrographic Organization.

In March 2012, in pursuance of the Memorandum of mutual understanding and cooperation between Rosreestr and the Committee on Real Estate of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, a seminar “Technologies in the sphere of developing geo spatial systems and infrastructure of spatial data’ was held. At the seminar, a special attention was paid to the technology of developing and maintenance of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names.