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Fourth United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names  
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR  
REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS  
CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Activities of Turkey in National Names Standardization  
since the Third United Nations Conference on  
the Standardization of Geographical Names

Paper presented by Turkey

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This report summarizes the activities of Turkey along various sectors of geographical names standardization over the past five years and, at the same time, reflects Turkey's view with respect to items in provisional agenda order.

Geographical/Linguistic Divisions (Agenda Item No.4)

Although geographical/linguistic divisions were revised in the past years, there are still some inconsistencies in their naming and composition.

Some divisions are named according to geographical space units corresponding to major cultural realms (e.g. Africa East, Latin America), whereas some others are named after purely linguistic groups.

Turkish delegation wishes to draw attention to these methodological inconsistencies and believes that the regional system based on the facts of areal, geographical, linguistic and cultural differentiation is comparatively the most appropriate method for naming the divisions.

Inconsistency is also evident in divisional compositions. Besides some areally small divisions composed of countries belonging to the same language family, there exist extremely large and linguistically heterogeneous divisions such as the Asia South-West (other than Arabic) Division. To avoid serious

difficulties arising from such artificial groupings, we suggest creation of sub-divisions within linguistically heterogeneous large divisions.

Turkish delegation believes that these problems require discussion and solution during the Conference.

National Standardization Activities (Agenda Item No.5)

In Turkey, attempts of geographical names standardization started in the late thirties when the Ministry of Interior set up a permanent committee on names of inhabited places. Since the Third Conference, several aspects of standardization activities have been given a gradually increasing importance and are efficiently supported by the Government.

Field collection of geographical names is usually done by mapping officers during their field work. Names are filled in special forms arranged for this purpose. In case of differing names for the same geographical feature, decision is made by Harita Genel Müdürlüğü (General Directorate of Mapping) in co-operation with other name authorities.

As outlined in the document entitled "Toponymic Guidelines for Cartography - Turkey", which has been distributed to the Conference members, there are at present three name authorities in Turkey. They are The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (responsible for names of populated places and administrative divisions); Harita Genel Müdürlüğü (responsible for field collection and standardization of physiographic features); and Local Municipal Boards (having the competence to standardize or change names of city quarters, streets, roads, squares, parks, etc.). In addition, a National Board on Geographic Names is set up and will be given legal competence to coordinate all national names standardization activities.

A useful product of recent activities of National Board on Geographic names is the work "Toponymic Guidelines for Cartography - Turkey". It is prepared in accordance with the standard model suggested by Professor J.Breu (Austria), and includes all information necessary for using Turkish maps

efficiently. Turkish delegation is convinced that guidelines for cartography are one of the most valuable results of standardization activities and hopes that they will be published by United Nations to ensure maximum practical use.

Gazetteers (Agenda Item No.7)

The national gazetteer of Turkey, produced by the Harita Genel Müdürlüğü list alphabetized names of nearly 30.000 populated places and main physiographic features of the country. List of names, approved by the National Board, were collected from the Turkish map at the scale of 1:500.000. The Gazetteer includes also locational data for each name, with the longitude based on Greenwich.

Two other gazetteers were also published by the Ministry of Interior, successively in 1977 and 1978. One of them (published in 1978) lists standardized names of over 36.000 settlements, and the second volume (published in 1977) deals with the changes made in names of physiographic features.

Turkish delegation considers national gazetteers as an important contribution to the international activities on standardization and supports the idea of preparing regional gazetteers by means of co-operative work of experts of the countries concerned. Co-operatively produced regional gazetteers may serve as a sound source material for the projected concise gazetteer of the world.

Exonyms (Agenda Item No.11)

Turkey attaches great importance to the study of Turkish exonyms. In view of the fact that study of exonyms becomes in many cases a prerequisite to the evaluation of historical documents and archives and Turkish is extremely rich in exonyms, a research team headed by Prof. Erinc has been working to prepare a list of exonyms currently employed in Turkish language. However the research group has so far made little progress because of difficulties in identification. Therefore, Turkish delegation would greatly appreciate any documentary help and suggestions offered by experts of neighbouring countries, and invites them to co-operate.

Already in 1941, exonyms were categorized by the Turkish Geographical Society according to the nature and extent of their usage and, spelling rules were established which are still generally observed. Deletion of exonyms is recommended for those names which differ from the official forms only slightly, and therefore, are easily identifiable. Examples: Estergom (Turkish: Estergon), Mohacs (Turkish: Mohaç), Kirdjali (Turkish: Kırçalı), Tirnovo (Turkish: Tirnova). This is in complete agreement with the recommendation of the Third United Nations Standardization Conference.

Maritime and Undersea Features (Agenda Item No.12)

Turkish delegation wishes to express his appreciation for the excellent work done by Mr. Richard R. Randall, the chairman of the Working Group on Maritime and Undersea Features. Gazetteer of Undersea Features, published in 1981 by the United States, is a scientifically high-standing work of great practical value. However, it needs to be complemented with addition of new names designating several important features of undersea topography.

Writing Systems (Agenda Item No.13)

A phonetic transcription key to Turkish alphabet is included in the document "Toponymic Guidelines for Cartography-Turkey". Turkish delegation is aware of great achievements made in the field of romanization, and wishes to express his thanks to the convenor and members of the Working Group on Single Romanization System. We believe that continuation of this tedious work of great practical value should be further encouraged by the Fourth Conference.