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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
SIXTH CONFERENCE

**Standardization of Geographical Names in the
Russian Federation between 1992 and 1997**

Paper submitted by Russia**

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Standardization of Geographical Names in the Russian Federation between 1992 and 1997

The work on the standardization of geographical names carried out since 1992 was aimed at the solution of the following high priority tasks:

- to improve the procedure of the national standardization of geographical names;
- to develop legislative and normative basis for the standardization of geographical names;
- to compile manuals, normative dictionaries and reference-books on geographical names;
- to revise the application of the transliteration system for releasing cartographic products for international use;
- to store geographical names in the catalogue;
- to co-operate with other countries on geographical name issues.

1. Improvement of the procedure to carry out national standardization of geographical names in Russia

In 1992 political structure of Russia was totally changed. This year, June 12, the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation was adopted. Development of the new Constitution began, and on the 12th December, 1993, it was adopted.

The issues related to geographical features naming are reflected in the new edition of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. It refers naming of geographical features to federal jurisdiction. Thus, the State is entrusted with the responsibility and duty to carry out the work relating to geographical names.

In May, 1994, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted the Resolution "On some measures to regularize the use of geographical names in the Russian Federation", that established the Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names. The Committee status and membership was set up.

The Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names was established as permanent authority to co-ordinate among different branches the activity to generate a single approach to geographical names, and to preserve them as a part of Russia's historical and cultural heritage.

Among the Committee's main goals are the following:

- to regularize geographical names use;
- to prepare suggestions to generate and implement a single approach to geographical names within the territory of the Russian Federation and out of its borders;
- to establish guiding principles for naming geographical features so that to ensure the unified and consistent use of place-names in the Russian Federation;
- to consider the issues of normative and methodical support for place-names collection, adoption of their official forms, storage, as well as for naming and renaming of geographical features in accordance with the rules and traditions of their use in the state language of the Russian Federation;
- to co-operate with foreign agencies, including the UN Group of Experts on geographical names;

- to supervise the compilation and publication of the dictionaries of geographical names for countries and regions, the development of normative documents guiding the use of geographical names in the Russian Federation.

The Committee, headed by the chief of the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography of Russia (Roskartografia), includes the representatives of more than twenty departments, agencies, institutes and organizations.

The Central Scientific Research Institute of Geodesy, Air survey and Cartography (CNIIGAiK) is responsible for scientific and methodical support of the Committee activity. The Institute is to develop the drafts of legislative and normative documents on geographical names, to prepare the prospective programme for developing new and revising the available guidelines, dictionaries and other normative and methodical documents, and to examine the suggestions on geographical naming and renaming submitted to the Committee.

The beginning of the permanent work of the Interdepartmental Committee considerably impacted on the promotion of more activity in relation to geographical names. Since its establishment, the Committee held six meetings, which considered and adopted specific solutions on a wide range of vital issues, including the following:

- the Committee's rules of procedure;
- the draft of the Federal Law "On naming of geographical features";
- the programme for revising and publishing current normative and methodical documents on the standardization of geographical names;
- the results of Russia's representatives participation in international arrangements carried by the UN Group of Experts on geographical names, and by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Researches (SCAR) devoted to geographical names;
- preliminary concept of developing the National Catalogue of geographical names in Russia;
- suggestions on the application of the available rules for Romanization of geographical names;
- drafts of new dictionaries of geographic names prepared for publication;
- decisions on more than 300 submissions on naming and renaming of geographical features in the Russian Federation, Antarctica and the World Ocean.

2. Development of legislative and normative basis to standardize geographical names

In 1996 on a commission from the Government of the Russian Federation, Roskartografia prepared the draft of the Federal law "On naming of geographical features". After consulting with the departments, agencies and organizations concerned, and approving by the Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names, the law was submitted to the State Duma by the Government of the Russian Federation. The State Duma adopted the Federal law "On naming of geographical features" by its Resolution from March 19, 1997, and passed it on to the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

The law determines the legislative basis for geographical naming and renaming, and for the standardization, usage, handling and storage of geographical names as a constituent part of the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples in the Russian Federation.

To implement the statements of the law, the Government of the Russian Federation will adopt normative and legislative documents specifying the procedure for consideration of the submissions on geographical naming and renaming, development and introduction of normative documents, handling of geographical names, as well as the procedure for supervising storage and correct usage of geographical names in Russia, and maintenance of the National Catalogue of geographical names. The programme for implementation of the high priority tasks to prepare these normative documents was adopted at the sixth meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names in May, 1997. Its implementation has begun.

The issues of geographical names standardization were *also* treated in the Federal law "On geodesy and cartography" adopted by the State Duma on the 22nd November, 1995, and signed by the President of Russia. The law establishes the legislative basis for the activity in the field of geodesy and cartography. According to this law, standardization and promotion for the unified usage of geographical names is referred to geodetic and cartographic activity of the federal level, that is funded by the federal budget. The federal executive authority on geodesy and cartography is determined as the state customer for this work.

In the recent decades, in this country, more than 100 normative and methodical documents on the collection, and unified usage, and Russian rendering of geographical names, and of geographical naming and renaming were developed, published and made valid. The guidelines, manuals and dictionartes comprise the data for nearly 200 countries and territories, and 140 languages of the world. In 1995, "The Catalogue of the effective normative and methodical documents on the standardization of geographical names" was released.

In the years of these guidelines and manuals being valid, the political map of the World underwent considerable changes, new data and approaches to some problems concerning the standardization of geographical names appeared. Therefore, many earlier developed normative documents are liable to revising and updating.

The Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names discussed and approved the prospective programme for step-by-step updating of normative documents.

3. Development of normative manuals, dictionaries and reference-books on geographical names

Between 1992-1997 the following was completed:

- Manual for the standardization of geographical names in Antarctica (the second updated edition);
- Dictionary of the names of hydrographic features in the Russian Federation and the CIS countries;
- Dictionary of geographical names of foreign countries of Europe;
- Dictionary of geographical names of the Russian Federation,
- Reference-book "The World states and territories".

The Manual for the Standardization of Geographical Names in Antarctica establishes the guiding principles and methods to refer the available names to certain features, to name the unnamed features, to promote for correct name forms in Russian, and for the correct rendering of names in Russian, and to transliterate the Russian names with the Roman script.

The second edition of the Manual has been prepared to meet the requirements of the current legislation of the Russian Federation pertaining to geographical names issues, and to account for the experience in treating Antarctica's geographical names gained recently.

The Dictionary of the Names of Hydrographic Features in the Russian Federation and the CIS Countries contains more than 12.5 thousand standardized names in Russian and in the official Romanization system. The names apply to the largest rivers, lakes, seas, gulfs, straits, reservoirs, channels and other hydrographic features. The Dictionary also involves approximately 4 thousand name variants, which have become obsolete, but still occur in some sources.

The Dictionary of Geographical Names of Foreign Countries of Europe comprises nearly 13 thousand standardized names in the Russian and national languages. These are the names of countries, administrative units of the first order, largest or well-known populated places, geographical features of foreign (in respect to Russia) countries of Europe.

The Dictionary of Geographical Names of the Russian Federation contains more than 12 thousand standardized names in Russian and in the official Roman transcription. It embraces the names of republics, krais, oblast's, okrugs, regions, towns, town-like villages, and some other populated places famous for some historical or cultural, or some other reasons, as well as of the largest and important in particular territories, geographical features of the Russian Federation.

In the dictionaries mentioned, the standardized names are accompanied by generic terms and location description, and by some other information to simplify the identification of a feature. They also contain name variants taken from the sources.

These dictionaries and manuals have been considered by the Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names and recommended for publishing. They are under publication now.

In 1997 the revised and updated reference-book "The World States and Territories" was compiled. It includes the Russian names of more than 200 states and territories of the World (in a full and short form) together with their capitals. The reference-book provides information on territorial composition of countries (including islands), their territorial claims, as well as the recommendations how to portray them on the World Political Map at scale 1:15,000,000.

4. Application in Russia of the transliteration system for cartographic products intended for international use

The Fifth UN Conference on the standardization of geographical names in 1987 (Montreal) approved the Romanization system for the names spelt in Russian intended for international use, suggested by the USSR.

In 1992-1997, this Romanization system was further applied for the cartographic products aimed at international use. At the same time, CNIIGAik investigated the gained experience in relation to present circumstances. This investigation resulted in the updated edition of "The Rules for the transliteration of geographical names of the Russian Federation by

the Roman script” suggested by the Institute, and considered and approved at the sixth meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names.

5. Cataloguing of geographical names

At present, in Russia, there are several catalogues of geographical names maintained by different agencies to cope with particular tasks. The data file of geographical names in the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography is the most generic one. The data file is maintained for all countries of the World. It comprises the data on the names for nearly 2 million geographical features. The data file is being constantly updated and extended, in the first turn with the account of map making needs.

The Roskartografia’s data file serves the basis to prepare dictionaries of geographical names and other reference books. In addition, at the queries of different customers, the spelling of some place-names and lists of them has been corrected for map making.

The task has been specified to convert the available data files into the single Russia’s National Catalogue of Geographical Names. This task has been formulated by paragraph 10 in the Federal law “On naming of geographical names”.

Because of novelty and complexity of the problem, it was decided prior to starting its practical implementation, to make some investigations for to detail the goals and tasks of the National Catalogue, to determine users demands, to select the scale of the basic topographic map, to determine the optimum data contents, encoding system and the standard record format for the Catalogue, to formulate the requirements to the soft- and hardware. CNIIGAiK is to carry out these investigations.

6. International co-operation on geographical names

International co-operation in the standardization of geographical names has been developed in the main three directions:

- participation in the arrangements under the aegis of the UN Group of Experts on geographical names;
- data exchange with the CIS countries;
- participation in the SCAR Working Group.

1. International co-operation within the UN Group of Experts on geographical names

After detailing the composition of the regional divisions of the UN Group of Experts at the Sixth UN Conference on the standardization of geographical names, Russia entered the Division of Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia and to the Baltic Division. During the time after the Conference, the liaison with the countries, permanent members or observers in the mentioned divisions, was provided via correspondence or participation in the arrangements within the divisions.

In October 1994, Russia participated in the first meeting of the division of Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia held in Kiev. At this meeting, Russia was charged with performing the functions of the division co-ordinator.

In May 1995, Russia's representative participated in the training courses in toponymy for the experts of the CIS countries, the division of Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia of the UN Group of Experts on geographical names carried out by the experts of the US Board on geographical names.

In July 1996, the second meeting of the division of Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia of the UN Group of Experts on geographical names was held in Moscow. At this meeting, the participants informed each other on the work on national standardization of geographical names carried out in the recent 2-3 years, and discussed and approved the draft of the report on the activity of the division countries, prepared by its chairman for the 18th session of the UN Group of Experts on geographical names in Geneva.

In pursuance of the functions of the country-co-ordinator in the division of Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia, Roskartografia sent the division chairman V.M. Boginsky to attend the 18th session of the UN Group of Experts on geographical names, that was held in the Palace of Nations in Geneva, 12-23 August, 1996. The information on the main results of the session that he prepared, was disseminated to all the countries composing the division.

In May 1997, Russia's representative attended the second meeting of the Baltic division and the international toponymic courses arranged for the experts of this division (Riga).

2. Co-operation with the CIS countries

In pursuance of the resolution carried by the Inter-state Council for Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and the Earth Remote Sensing of the CIS state-members, the Working Group on geographical names was established. The first meeting of the Working Group was held in Moscow, in July, 1996. At the meeting, the minutes were adopted, which included the following:

- the information bulletin "Changes in geographical names of the CIS countries" was approved and recommended for publication with the additional data as of January 1, 1996;
- it was recommended to arrange exchange of information on the changes-in geographical names under the aegis of the CIS Executive Committee;
- the preliminary agenda for the second meeting of the Working Group was formulated.

3. Co-operation with SCAR Working Group on geodesy and geographical information

Russia participated in the preparation and discussion of the international rules for the standardization of Antarctica's geographical names. These long-term efforts resulted in the compiling of the international gazetteer of geographical names for this region.

STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION BETWEEN 1992 AND 1997

SUMMARY

The report covers the main activity in the standardization of geographical names carried out in Russia after the Sixth UN Conference on the standardization of geographical names. This activity was aimed at the solution of the following vital tasks:

- to improve the procedure of the national standardization of geographical names;
- to develop legislative and normative basis for the standardization of geographical names;
- to compile manuals, normative dictionaries and reference-books on geographical names;
- to revise the application of the transliteration system for releasing cartographic products for international use;
- to store geographical names in the catalogue;
- to co-operate with other countries on geographical name issues.

The reported period shows considerable changes in the activity concerning geographical names, as the new edition of the Constitution of the Russian Federation adopted on 12th December, 1993, refers the issues of geographical naming to federal jurisdiction.

In May, 1994, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted the Resolution that established the Interdepartmental Committee on geographical names. The report enlists the main objectives of the Committee, and the results obtained.

The report informs about the Federal law "On naming of geographical features" adopted in 1997, and the preparation of normative legislative documents to ensure its implementation.

The dictionaries and reference-book on geographical names released for the recent five years, are listed. The information on the application in Russia of the transliteration system for the cartographic products intended for international use, is provided.

The status for the development of the Catalogue of geographical names is given. The task is determined to develop the automated Catalogue of Russia's geographical names based at 1:100,000 topographic map.

The results of Russia's participation in the international co-operation for the given period, are reported.