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**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of
geographical names since the Eighth Conference**

Standardization of Geographical Names in Japan

Submitted by Japan**

The geographical names that people use daily in Japan include the innumerable names of residential areas and natural features. The collection, arrangement and standardization of these names will help to promote and enhance economic and social activities, and also support efforts to preserve historical and cultural assets. The standardization of geographical names is a well-coordinated effort involving various related organizations each of which has clearly defined tasks.

A. The effort of each organization towards standardization

1. Standardization of residential geographical names

The names of administrative units for municipalities and their hierarchic details such as town divisions (*cho*), village divisions (*oaza*) and village blocks (*aza*), that is to say, residential geographical names, are regulated by law; and new names and their areas are published in official gazettes of the national and prefectural governments. Given this kind of legal control, there should be no confusion resulting from different pronunciations, characters, etc., of residential geographical names.

* E/CONF.98/1.

** Prepared by Japan.



2. Unification of geographical names of natural features

The Geographical Survey Institute compiles maps of land areas, and the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard compiles maps of mostly marine areas. Because of discrepancies in geographical names used on the maps prepared separately by the two agencies, they agree in 1960 to establish the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which meets once or twice a year.

The Committee has been standardizing geographical names based on each map since its establishment. However, because this information has not been managed with positional coordinates and a considerable amount of work time was involved, the conventional method has had some problems, so that geographical names have not been changed quickly. Therefore, future objectives are now being considered, such as constructing a database that can be used with the geographic information system.

3. Adoption of maritime geographical names

Undersea features discovered or surveyed by Japan's maritime survey organizations are given official names by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard, based on the recommendations of the Japanese Committee on Undersea Feature Names. In its deliberations, the Committee refers to "The standardization of undersea features", which was prepared jointly by the General Bathymetric Chart of the Ocean Subcommittee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) and the Working Group on Names of Maritime and Undersea Features of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

Since the eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (2002), names have been given to 40 undersea landforms, making a current total of 1,182 undersea landform names.

4. Adoption of Antarctic geographical names

With the exception of geographical features found in the region south of 60 degrees S that have been either named by other countries or used internationally, the topographical features discovered by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition (JARE) and points of major geodetic or observational interest are tentatively named based on the "Rules for the naming of Antarctic geographical features (decisions of headquarters of JARE)". These tentative names are submitted by the Committee for Naming Antarctic Places to the headquarters of JARE, which decides on the official names. Currently, 314 names have been officially approved and registered.

B. National geographical names gazetteer

In August 2007, the Japanese Government revised the previous (1997) edition of "Gazetteer of Japan" in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. This gazetteer contains about 4,000 geographical names, which appear in 1:1,000,000-scale maps prepared by the Geographical Survey Institute as well as 1:1,000,000-scale bathymetric charts and 1:3,500,000-scale international charts prepared by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard.