



Economic and Social Council

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Economic and social benefits of the national and international standardization of geographical names

Social cohesion and economic benefits of standardizing geographical names

Submitted by South Africa**

According to the South African Geographical Names Council Act, 1998, the South African Geographical Names Council is a permanent advisory body that advises the Minister of Arts and Culture on the transformation and standardization of geographical names in South Africa for official use. The Council should also create awareness among the public on economic and social benefits of geographical names.

The issue of social and economic benefits has been raised several times in Parliament. The department has appointed the Human Science Research Council, which is an independent organization, to produce an objective report on the effects of geographical names in our multicultural society and on our economy.

This study is focusing on the following:

- Economic benefits of standardizing names (including contribution to tourism, heritage promotion, branding of the country, etc.).
- Social benefits of standardizing names (including nation-building, reconciliation, symbolic reparations, development of a new national consciousness, etc.). We would like this study to be relevant to the South African situation by drawing on some of its examples with respect to recent developments in naming and gross domestic product (GDP) figures in some provinces. For example, it has been reported in the media (*Mail & Guardian*, 25 June-1 July 2004) that in Limpopo, the Minister of Education and Culture for Finance and Economic Development has good reason to be proud of the province's growth over the past 10 years, which was achieved against seemingly impossible odds.

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The scope of the provincial economy had stood at a modest R 14 billion in 1994 — the second smallest in the country. However, in 2001, Limpopo registered the highest economic growth rate in the country, namely 6.3 per cent, which was well above the national figure.

Once set on its winning streak, the province never looked back. The Minister of Education and Culture announced in his budget speech in 2003 that the Limpopo economy had grown to R 64 billion, having shown a fourfold improvement within nine years. The 2004 figure could well touch R 80 billion.

During this period, Limpopo has been in the news for changing the names of some of its major towns and cities. It will be instructive to use Limpopo as a case study to check whether standardization of geographical names has contributed positively or negatively to this achievement by the province.
