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Agenda item 5(a) of the provisional agenda *

**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the
standardization of geographical names**

Report of Saudi Arabia

Submitted by Saudi Arabia **

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** Prepared by Abdullah Nasser Alwelaie, Vice Chairman the National Committee on Geographical Names, First Deputy Chairman of the Arabic Division of Experts on Geographical Names

Agenda Item 5 (A)

Title: Report of Saudi Arabia

By

Abdullah Nasser Alwelaie

**Vice Chairman the National Committee on Geographical Names, First Deputy
Chairman of the Arabic Division of Experts on Geographical Names**

alwelaie@hotmail.com

www.alwelaie.com

Preface

Due to a growing worldwide interest in, and concern with, place names in general, and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in particular, where this concern has led to a proliferation of multiple official bodies interested in place names; and because of the importance of unifying efforts exerted by such governmental bodies, the Royal Decree no. 36072 dated 04-08-2013 was issued for the purpose of establishing the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN) to incorporate all governmental agencies with related interests, with its headquarter at King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA). The general aim of the NCGN is to promote interest in, and verification of, place names in the Kingdom, and it also aims mainly at unifying all efforts pertaining to place names in the KSA in terms of their writing, orthography, spelling and all that is compatible with relevant national standards and databases; as well as performing all works that will assist in representing the Kingdom in international conferences and symposiums. All of which will eventually make the NCGN the only competent authority for such an activity. The NCGN enjoys the membership of fifteen governmental authorities. We will highlight the achievements of some of some of them during the last two years as follows:

I. King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA):

Under the direction and supervision of His Excellency Dr. Fahad Al-Semmari, the chairman of the National Committee on Geographic Names (NCGN) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, NCGN has achieved the following, being placed in King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA):

1. Marginal to the activities of the "First Meeting of Saudi Archeologists," his Royal Highness Prince Faisal b. Bandar b. Abdulaziz, governor of the Riyadh Region, inaugurated the Saudi Geonames explorer project in the KSA, which was fully implemented by the Saudi Historical Geographical Information Systems Center (SHGISC) at King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives and, under the supervision of the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN) of Saudi Arabia. It should be known that this application is compatible with all smart phone systems and designed with the most up-to-date technologies used in the creation of all smart applications.



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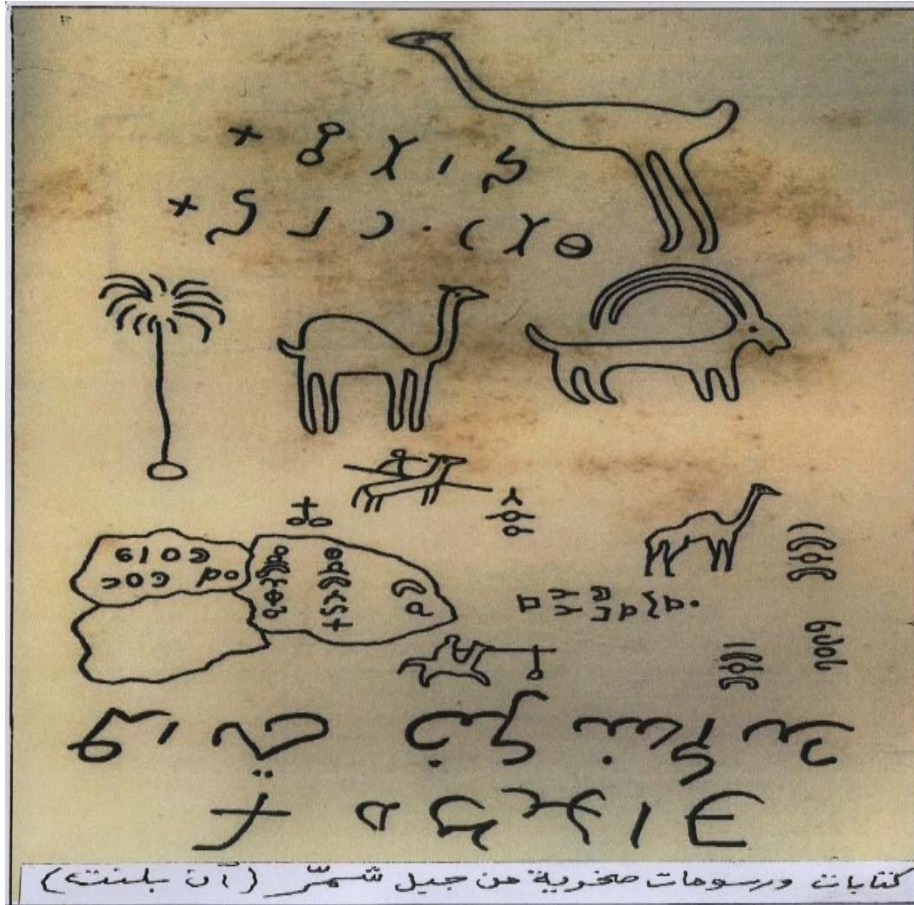
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2. Preparation, as an initial start, of a book entitled "Archaeology of the KSA in the Writings of European travelers", by Dr. Hasan Abdulaziz Ahmed (pending publication).



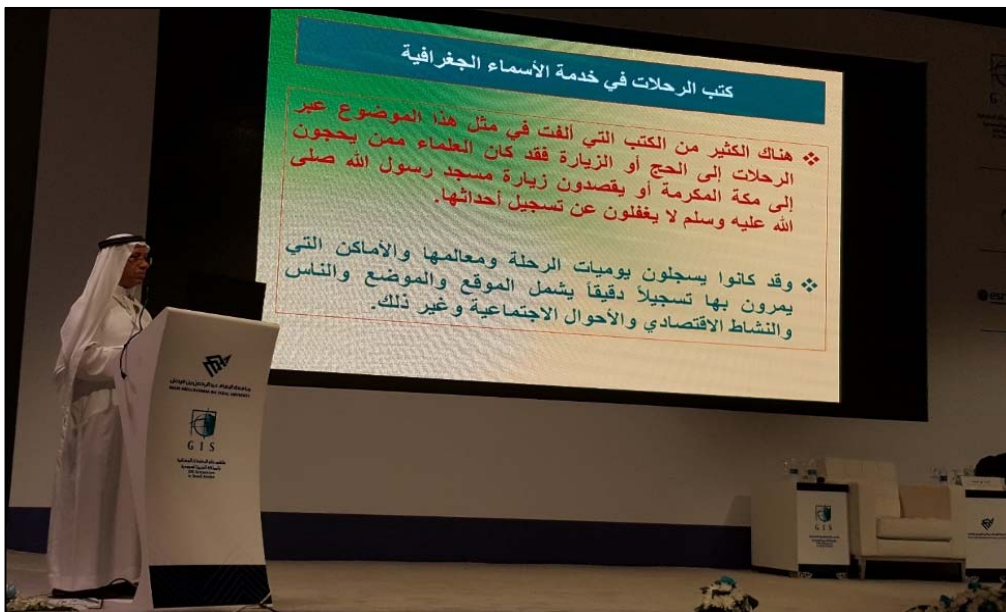
- Attendance of the activities of the international GIS Day, 2017, held at King Saud University, Riyadh. During which HH Dr. Naif Bin Thunayan Al Saud paid a visit to King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA) Stand in the exhibition accompanying these activities. King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA) participated by delivering a lecture on "The Application of the Saudi GeoNames Explorer", illustrating its properties, aims and manner of handling this application by giving a demo presentation.



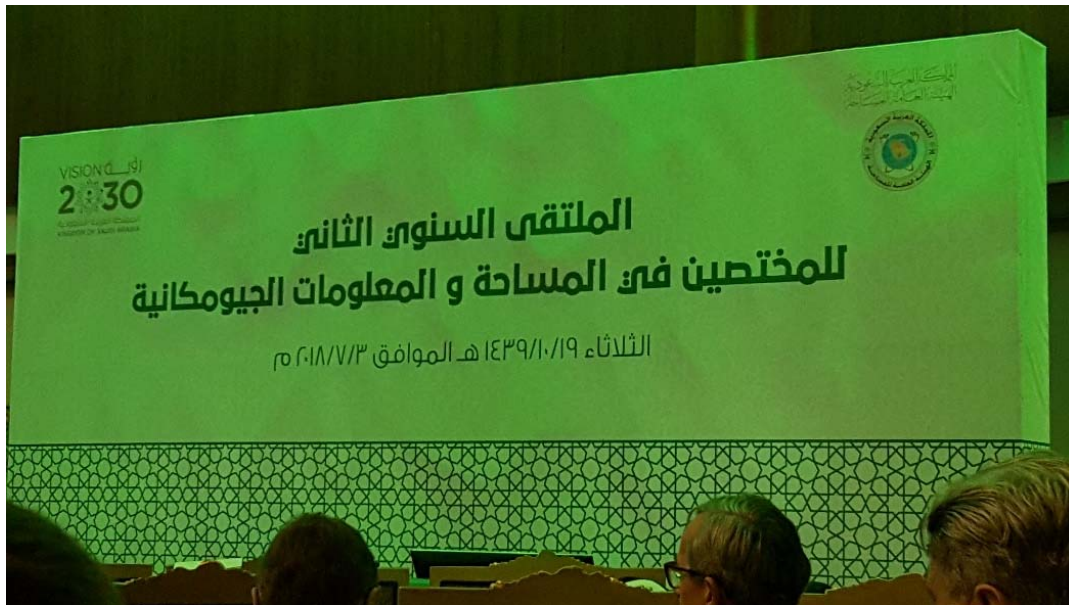


4. Issuing of the Council of Minister's Decision No. 318 dated 06-03-2018, which approves principles governing the work of the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN) in the KSA, which provides for the following:
 - Coordination between governmental bodies concerned with geographical names and the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN), as the official authority for presenting vis-à-vis recommendations, when such bodies desire to release new names, or change existing ones.
 - Compilation and propagation of geographical names of the KSA, and undertaking pertinent acts as a prelude to the preparation of a database.
 - Preparation, in coordination with bodies concerned with geographical names, an indexed national lexicon that includes these names in their Romanized form, so as to make it a binding reference or authority for all governmental bodies.
 - Coordination and cooperation with governmental bodies concerned with geographical names, in all efforts that are being exerted in this respect.
 - Representation of the KSA internally and externally in all matters pertaining to geographical names, as well as cooperating and participating in the preparation of the world lexical geographical catalogue.

5. Participation in the 12th Saudi GIS meeting convened in Dammam from 10-12 April 2018, with a scientific paper entitled "Saudi GeoNames Explorer in the KSA" with the aim of acquainting the audience with efforts being exerted in the service of toponymy, and surveillance of all efforts that the KSA has exerted in the field of place name studies, as well as highlighting the activities of King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA) and all governmental bodies in this field.



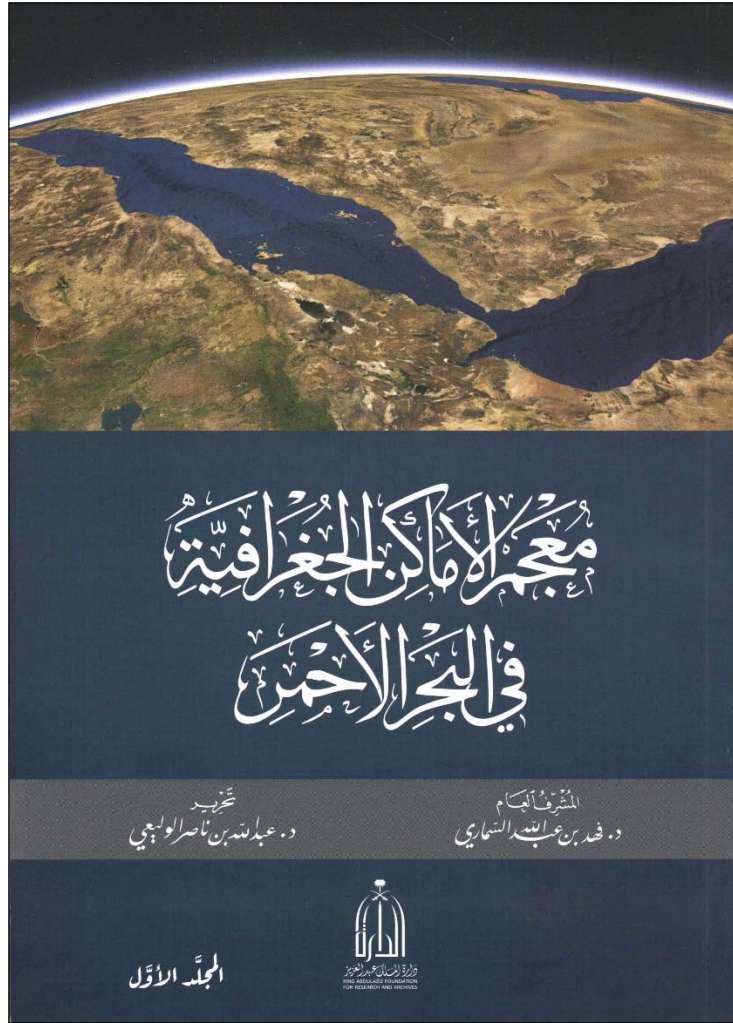
6. Attendance of the "2nd Annual Meeting of Specialists in the field of Surveying and Geospatial Information", organized by the General Commission for Survey, and held in Riyadh on 03-07-2018 at The Digital City.



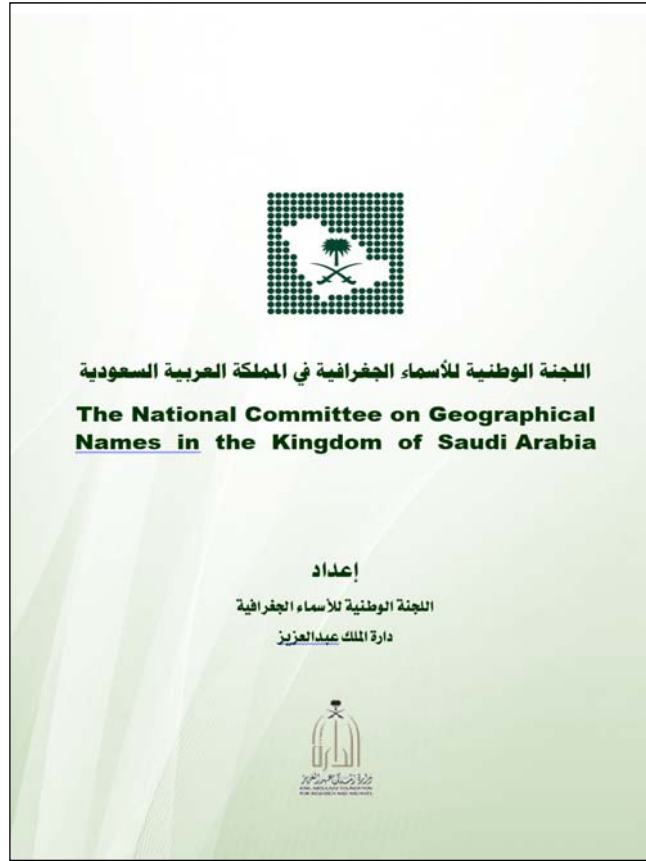
7. Publication of the book entitled "The Gazetteer of Geographical names in the Red Sea" that includes, in its four volumes, all places found on the Red Sea Coast and the Gulf of Aden.

This Gazetteer identifies all these places, which almost number 2700 names, distributed among all countries abutting on the Red Sea: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Yemen, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of the Sudan, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Occupied Palestine, The Republic of Somalia, the Republic of Djibouti and the Republic of Eritrea, indicating their map location, together their important historical and geographical features, touristic activities and economic potentialities.

This Gazetteer is alphabetically organized with a lengthy introduction on the Red Sea, together with illustrative maps of all places included, in addition to a series of photographs that highlight important features, plus an Arabic and English indices of these places.



8. Preparation of an introductory pamphlet on the "National Committee on Geographical Names in the KSA", that includes:
- History of its foundation;
 - Text of the decision issued by the Council of Ministers approving the principles governing the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN);
 - Achievements of the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN) since its inception up to now (January 2019);
 - A list of publications released by King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA) in the field of geographical names in the KSA;
 - Archival photos of attendance of the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN) members at international conferences.



9. The National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN) convened four meetings within this year (2018): the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th, all held in King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (KAFRA) administrative hall, with all its members attending.
10. An executive subsidiary Committee has emerged from the National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN), and held two meetings in the office of the NCGN vice-chairman.
11. The National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN) has started receiving questions from governmental bodies about the appropriateness of altering/modifying some of the place names; for example, the NCGN has received, in this respect, petitions from Taif Governorate concerning four locations: (WĀDĪ NISHRĀN, AS SAYL AL KABĪR, MĪQĀT WĀDĪ MAḤRAM, MĪQĀT QARN AL MANĀZIL (AS SAYL), AL JIFIN, AL KHIRR).

II. Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH):

The SCTH is concerned with archaeological, historical and heritage sites as well as with common touristic sites and their protection from any transgression and abuse to their components and from any tampering that results in negative impacts on their environments.

- 1 – The SCTH has operated according to its regulatory system embodied in the Royal Decree No. 78, dated 16-04-2000, which ordains the establishment of a national archaeological record that includes the following:

-An electronic database which includes all information regarding archaeological, heritage and historical sites.

-Data on touristic sites and museums in addition to support services such as accommodation for tourist hotels, furnished suites or flats, rest-houses and the like. Such data must include information about names of such sites/services and their coordinates, which, after its analysis, should be converted to digital products in the form of maps, satellite images, according to a system of politics and procedures, which depend on the following:

- Basic layers of the specifications which have already been accredited by the National Committee for Geographic Information Systems (NSDI).
- Layers of updated road network within and outside cities issued by the Ministry of Transport and Municipalities.
- Satellite image authorized by King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) and Saudi Geological Survey (SGS).
- Administrative boundaries of regions and provinces (From the Ministry of Interior).
- Layer of services with their various classifications and types.
- Layer of touristic, archaeological and heritage sites.
- Layer of both Touristic tracks: Touristic track or heritage/cultural track.
- Layer of public utilities land use (From Municipalities).
- Water resources layers: dams, lakes, torrent courses and valleys (From Ministry Environment, Water and Agriculture).
- Layer of railway lines.
- Layer of airports, both national (domestic) and international.
- Layer of seaports with their various types.

2 – The National Record for Archaeology and Urban Heritage:

This Record contains a digital database in which is registered all information concerning archaeological, historical and heritage sites including their names and coordinates. The number of such sites which have been recorded up to now reaches about (11.000) sites. Work being conducted now aims at completing the remaining sites not included in the first record, and production of digital informatics map according to scientific and practical methodology that enables one make to the best use of its output in a direct way.

3 – Map Production:

The process of map production depends directly on the following:

- employment of spatial information system as databases for cultural heritage resources;
- Representation of this data on digital maps and aerial photographs, using GIS programs, and projection of archaeological sites onto maps or on desired aerial photos.

Natural Sites:

- The Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage has established geo-databases for touristic sites in the KSA that contain information on these sites together with their photographs. This was done after carrying out a comprehensive survey of the touristic sites in cooperation with regional governmental bodies.
- 956 sites with capabilities for development have already been specified in the thirteen regions of the KSA according to defined technical criteria and in cooperation with relevant bodies in these regions.
- These sites have been confirmed, or approved, by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage board of directors, and a mechanism for their protection and preservation has been set up in cooperation with a number of relevant governmental bodies in these regions.