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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

Report of Israel

**Submitted by the East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic), Naftali
Kadmon, Israel**

Report of Israel

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This report deals with the following subjects of the standardization of geographical names: transliteration systems; the duality of orthography in official maps; and the Government Names Commission.

1. Transliteration Systems

Israel is a multilingual country, with two official languages (Hebrew and Arabic), with several other languages being spoken widely without constituting minority languages. The State is also a country of extensive tourism, much of this being based on religious considerations. Therefore, problems of transliteration are of great practical importance. The language spoken by the great majority of the population is Hebrew, and the two transliteration systems of major importance in maps and road signs are those from Hebrew into Latin script and into Arabic. The former has an official system of transliteration ratified in 1956 and still in force. But considerations presented in the past to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and to the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names resulted in steps taken to overcome some of its deficiencies. The competent authority, the Academy of the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem, has as yet taken no final decision. Any developments will be reported to the Eighth Conference.

The transliteration from Hebrew into Arabic was being performed until now according to a system published by the British Mandatory Government of the country in 1931. Here, too, some changes are considered necessary, because some Hebrew consonants are not properly represented because Arabic has no equivalent letters. These problems are discussed in a Working Paper to be presented to the 20th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

2. Duality of orthography in official maps of Israel

In the past, all official maps in Hebrew produced by the *Survey of Israel*, national authority on surveying and mapping, were printed with complete vocalization. However, this orthography is hardly used in Israel, although it is the best and most precise for expressing the correct phonology of the names involved. But the vocalization markers often get lost in the reproduction process, and anyway Israelis read without them. There is, however, the so-called *plene orthography* (*ketiv malé*) which replaces vowel markers with consonant letters, and this is used in all everyday print such as books and newspapers. Moreover, computerization of map script found it somewhat difficult to cope with markers, and therefore plene orthography was introduced in all GIS-based topographic maps and town plans. So at the time of writing (and for some time to come in the future), several national maps in smaller scales (i.e. 1:250,000 and below) still appear in vocalized orthography, but newer automated maps follow plene orthography. Pronunciation is the same, and transliteration into other scripts is not affected.