

**Twenty-third Session  
Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006**

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**Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda:  
Activities relating to the Working Group  
on Country Names**

**List of Country Names**

# **List of Country Names**

## **Abstract**

Preparing a list of country names based on the last approvals of the UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names has always been one of the objectives of the Committee of Standardization of Geographical names. Based on this, the Working Group on Exonyms was established which began its activities with study of all available resources. More than 192 countries on the UN List were considered with the objective of gathering correct data on these names. After this study, a list of country names was prepared which contained information such as formal names, complete names, common names, local or original names, formal languages, standard country code, country name in Persian and their transcriptions. In addition, information about the capitals of the countries, such as the formal name of capitals, their Persian names and their transcriptions were included.

Finally, after submitting the list to the Committee for review and discussion on its contents, the committee approved the list as “Country Names version 1.0”. This list includes information which can be applied by the mass media, map producers, ministries, and all organizations and used in atlases and books by people related with the subject who are looking for a reliable and standard source of country names.

## **Introduction**

After establishment of the Iranian Expert Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names in 1991, the Exonym Working Group was formed. Its first task was to provide a list of country names. Establishment of this working group followed the establishment of such a working group in the International Conference on Standardization of Genomes and based on the suggestion of that conference to standardize country names. This working group began its work in 1994. The aim of the Iranian committee was to standardize country names and capitals in the Persian language. In fact, it has occurred that two or more names have been used for one country or capital, therefore a standard list to solve the problem was necessary.

In fact, Exonyms are a part of everyday news that we hear: names such as Florence, Paris, Cairo, Tripoli and Isfahan. These names have been formed through centuries and are unchangeable. Up to present, a Standard method for recording and pronouncing these exonyms did not exist. For example, Japan is called Nihhon in their own language and is written Nippon by them, while in English it is called Japan. Suppose if we want to write the Latin name of this country. What dictation should we choose?

In providing a list of country names, we are faced with problems such as: lack of proper fonts (in PC) to transcribe the country names and capitals, multiple and sometimes contradictory sources, lack of coherence in pronunciation of some names, etc. The point was that some country names and capitals were so unfamiliar that there was no source on how to write and pronounce them.

Finally, after several revisions and checking, the list was approved in March 2005 by the Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical names.

## **Materials and Methods**

During the first phase of the working group activities, only a small number of exonyms (country names) were considered.

Parallel to providing the list of country names, the proceedings and approvals of all eight conferences and twenty Meetings on Standardization of Geographical Names, including the number and names of countries of the world based on the latest UN list presented in the Eighth Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names in 2002, were reviewed and precisely studied (Document No: E.CONF.94/CRPM).

At the same time, in order to find the endonyms (the local and original names) and solve controversies in application of some of the names, more studies have been conducted. By considering different applications of names in some of the countries, based on the type of language, proper endonyms have been applied. In the next step, a standard ISO code has been used for each country. At this stage, after definition and approval of the transcription system in the thirty-second meeting of the Committee of and Standardization of Genomes in Iran, transcription of Farsi Romanize, Farsi Exonyms and country capitals began. The benefits of providing a list of country names include the correct and standard application of names in the mass media, writing, editing, book/map publishing and their correct application in geographical issues and geosciences.

The transcriptions in this list are presented using the Transcription System of the Islamic Republic of Iran, approved in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Expert Committee on Nomination and Standardization of Geographical Names and submitted to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Expert Meeting of the UN. The Committee's website address is:  
[www.geonames.ncc.org.ir](http://www.geonames.ncc.org.ir)

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This list contains information about countries whose information has not been presented with such a format before in Iran. One of the characteristics of this list is that

it is based on the approved list of the United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geonames. In fact, these names are the only reliable source of information in this field.

For each country in the list, the information below is included:

- 1) Official country name (it includes the official name of a country which is used in formal communities and correspondences).
- 2) Complete country name
- 3) Common country names in Iran (names that are usually used for countries in Iran)
- 4) Names with local dialects of each country endonyms (name of a country with local dialect of that country)
- 5) Official language of each country
- 6) The international abbreviated code for each country.
- 7) Country name in the Persian language and its transcription.
- 8) The official name of country capitals in the Persian language and their transcriptions.

As mentioned before, this list only contains country names and their capitals, while country names are only part of exonyms. Other exonyms must be considered in the next steps. Man-made features such as cities, villages, historical monuments and many other such features, which are outside Iranian territory and have names other than those used locally, must be studied and a standard list must be prepared. In addition, a complete list of names of natural features such as mountains, plains, rivers, seas, lakes and other natural features outside of Iranian borders, whose names differ in some way from their pronunciation in their original country, must be added.

### **Priorities in preparing future List of Exonyms**

- a) The distance of the feature from our country (being near or far)
- b) The importance of the feature from a historical view point.

In the first case, natural and man-made features can be included that have common borders with our country but with different names.

The second case will consist of names which are historically important for our country. As we know, many areas outside of Iran have names other than Iranian names, although they have Iranian identity. Collecting and recording such names in a written form, will be a long pace in promoting the Iranian culture and standardization of geographical names.