EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 26 February - 9 March 1979

Agenda Item No. 10(e)

Transliteration of the Arabic Alphabet

A system of transliterating the Arabic alphabet
to the Roman script to be used in the standardization of
geographical names was first considered by the divisional
meeting of the Group of Experts at Beirut in 1971. When
this system was submitted to the Second U.N. Conference
on the Standardization of Geographical Names (London, 1972),
further improvements on the Beirut system agreed upon by
the Arabic-speaking delegates, were submitted to the con-
ference and subsequently adopted (Resolution No. 8).

At the Third U.N. Conference on the Standardization
of Geographical Names (Athens, 1977) however, a few tech-
nical difficulties with regard to the application of the
diacritical marks were pointed out. The conference there-
fore recommended that "the Arabic division meet and discuss
the Moroccan proposal to arrive at a solution to be presen-
ted to the U.N.G.E.G.N."

Although the divisional group as such did not meet
prior to the Eighth U.N.G.E.G.N. that was held at New York
in February, 1979, the matter was raised at the Islamic
Geographical Conference that was held in Riyadh in January,
1979.[1] At the present session, the subject has been ex-
tensively discussed between the representatives of the
Arabic Division at the above-mentioned Eighth U.N.G.E.G.N.
and its Working Group On A Single Romanization System. As
a result, the representatives of the Arabic Division sub-
mit this paper which introduces minimal changes.

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[1]
The subject was raised by Dr. Tazi, Committee No. 4

Transliteration of the Arabic Alphabet

Arabic letters	Roman letters	Examples	
ء	(medial)	'	Bi'r	بئـــر
ء	(final)	'	Ṣanᶜā'	صنعـــاء
ب		B	al Baḥrayn	البحـرين
ت		T	Tūnis	تونـس
ث		Th	ath-Tharthār	الثرثار
		J	Jiddah	جـــدة
		Ḥ	Ḥalab	حلـــب
		Kh	Khaybar	خيبـــر
د		D	Dubay	دبي
ذ		Dh	al Ladhiqiyah	اللاذقيـه
ر		R	ar-Ribāṭ	الـرباط
ز		Z	al Jazā'r	الجـزائـر
س		S	Sīnā'	سيسنـاء
ش		Sh	Dimashq	دمشـق
ص		Ṣ	Ṣūr	صــور
ض		Ḍ	ad-Dār Al Bayḍā	الدار البيضاء
ط		Ṭ	Ṭrāblus	طرابلـس
ظ		Ẓ	Abū Ẓaby	ابو ظبي
ع		ᶜ	ᶜAdan	عـــدن

Arabic letters	Roman letters	Examples	
غ	Gh	Baghdād	بغـــداد
ف	F	Falasṭīn	فلسطـين
ق	Q	Qaṭar	قاطــر
ك	K	al Kuwayt	الكـــويت
ل	L	Lībya	ليبيـــا
م	M	Miṣr	مصـــر
ن	N	Lubnān	لبنـــان
ه	H	al Qāhirah	القاهـــره
و	W	Wahrān	وهـــران
ي	Y	al Yaman	اليمــن

Transliteration of Arabic Vowels, Dipthongs and Diacritical Marks

Arabic		Roman	Examples	
فتحه قصيره	Fatḥah Qasīrah	a	Makkah	مكـــة
فتحة طويلة	" Ṭawīlah	ā	ʿAmmān	عمـــان
كسرة قصيرة	Kasrah Qasīrah	i	ar-Riyādh	الريــاض
كسرة طويلة	" Ṭawīlah	ī	al-Madīnah	المدينـة
ضمة قصيرة	Ḍammah Qasīrah	u	ʿUmān	عمـان
ضمة طويلة	" Ṭawīlah	ū	al-Kharṭūm	الخرطــوم

Arabic		Roman	Examples	
التنوين المفتوح	at-Tanwīn al-Maftūḥ	aⁿ		
التنوين المكسور	at-Tanwīn al-Maksūr	iⁿ		
التنوين المضموم	at-Tanwīn al-Maḍmūm	uⁿ		
الحرف المشدد	al Harf al-Mushaddad	doubling	al-Mukalla	المكلا
ال (الشمسية)	al (ash-Shamsi-yah)	doubling the follo-wing letter	ash-Shāriqah	الشارقة
ال (القمرية)	al (al Qamariyah)	al	al-Qayrawān	القيروان
تا ءمربوطة (هاء)	Tā' Marbūtah (Hā')	h		
تا ءمربوطة (تاء)	" " (Tā')	t		