

**Ninth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 21 - 30 August 2007

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries

**And on the progress made in the standardization of geographical
Names since the Eighth Conference**

Focus Lights on Geographical Names Council

Submitted by Sudan **

* E/CONF.98/1.

** Prepared by National Council for Geographical Names, Sudan.

Focus Lights on
Geographical Names Council
Sudan

1/ The subject of geographical names is a fundamental subject in the construction of the Sudanese personality because they include a sound and a meaning, a history of the Sudanese person since he was first on the land of Sudan, and the Sudanese civilization and identity.

Geographical names were, and still most of them are, of a dear meaning to our fathers and grandfathers. Some of these names still preserve their antique meaning which is well-known to us, and some of us do not know their meanings, because centuries have accumulated upon it as sand accumulates on traces, and it needed explanations, excavation and diving in ancient and modern languages to discover its meaning.

2/ The people of Sudan do now speak more than a hundred languages, let alone the forgotten ones. Geographical names are originally words in those languages and have certain meaning which were connected to the psychology and society of people in those times. They include meanings of history and civilization. For these reasons, this committee has a big task of searching for the linguistic origins and the social and civil indications, and this is one of the concerns of the committee for foreign and historical names. This committee looks for the historical origin of the names on maps and everywhere, aiming

at fundamentally preserving at one side, and to facilitate the job of authorities to get the axes of historical and foreign spots, at another side.

This work aims also at making it easier for tourists and visitors to have maps of the historical, tourism, and ancient archaeological places to get to. Amongst the jobs of this committee also is to suggest the substitution of foreign names for others that are of origins which belong to Islamic and Sudanese Civilizations.

3/ There is another job awaiting the national committee, which is the way these names are to be written in Arabic and Latin letters, while Latin ones are not sufficient in representing Arabic words because there are ten Arabic sounds which do not have correspondents in Latin alphabet, they are (ء ح خ ق غ ع ظ ط ض ص). These sounds are found in geographical names that are of Arabic origins and we need to write them in Latin letters. Also Arabic letters are insufficient in representing many sounds that are of origins other than Arabic. It is note worthy that Arabic has just ten common sounds with Sudanese non-Arabic languages, which are (ي و ن م ك ر د ت ب ا) and which Dr. Khaleel Mahmoud Asakir has put in tow words (ندوات رمبيك). In the same time, there are sounds in Sudanese non-Arabic languages that do not exist in Arabic, like (n n c g) which need a system to be written, we need:-

a/ to suggest a system for Arabic names to be written in Latin letters and another one for non-Arabic names to be written in Arabic, in cooperation with the international system adopted by the United Nations.

b/ to suggest a system for naming natural places and the buildings, in other words: imposing the standards of choosing names for place, therefore the standards of changing undesired names.

In the first task(writing system), the work of the committee is near to that of phonetics in Assemblies of Languages, i.e phonetic research in the first place. The committee is guided by the findings of provincial committees concerning the right pronunciation of non-Arabic names.

Sudan is able to find a good system for writing Arabic and non-Arabic names, for its experience in writing the languages of the south in Arabic letters, as well as its contribution to the writing of non-Arabic names in Arabic letters at regional and international committees.

4/ Concerning the linguistic origin of geographical names, we can divide the Sudan into three zones:

- The First Zone: speaks Arabic as a first language, uncompleted by any other languages; as Nile State, Khartoum, Gezira and

White Nile States, inspite of the existence of Islands f non-Arabic languages.

- The Second Zone: in which Arabic is dominant, by there are other languages. Its people speak Arabic besides the local languages, as : Darfur and the Northern State.

- The Third Zone: where local languages, or one language, are dominant and people speak Arabic as a second language of communication used only in towns, as: South, Southern Kordofan, Kassala, the Red Sea and Southern Funge States.

The second and third zones are called zones of linguistic intervention, and the geographical names in them belong mostly to local languages. Names of Arabic origin are rare there. Even the first zone, in which Arabic is dominant, has many names that are of non-Arabic origins and that belong to other languages, even though they were made to have Arabic sounds and morphology. They became like Arabic names, as: Atbara (عظبرة), Shandie (شندي), Soba (سوبا), Aydage (العيدج), Sinja (سنجة), Fadasie (فداسي), Wawissie (واوسي)etc.

The origins of such words may be coming from the ancient dead languages which were being spoken one day in these areas, then they were exposed to weakness and degeneration in another time which led to their being dead and forgotten. In the 20th Century we have attended a number forgotten languages which are no longer spoken, as (Gulie) in western Damazine, (Birgid),

(Bartie) in Darfur, and (Haraza) in Haraza Mountain in Kordofan. Before these languages of Meroi had died besides other languages which were spoken by our ancestors and are unknown now. These languages may have left descendants, because a mother language usually evolves into dialects which become languages again between whose speakers it may be impossible to communicate, as Dinka, Shuluk and Noer; which were one language spoken by the individuals of these tribes easily, then a time came when that language braced into dialects which are now separate unique languages. The Dinka language is now branching into dialects as: Bor, Agor, Mulwal and Reck, and a time may come when these dialects become languages. This is what happened to Arabic, Hebrew, Aramese, Amhari, Tigrei, and Hararie languages which had been one language that evolved into dialects that became languages some of whom are dead and some are on the way.

5/ It is probable that most of the geographical names in Sudan belong to non-Arabic languages, ancient or contemporary as linguistic communities had moved to another linguistic region and with them had their geographical names used in their first region. An example of this is in the names of towns and states in the U.S.A. In Sudan, also, are examples of such names of towns as: (Bantiyo) in El Bageir and (Omdurman Fallata) in the road to El Damazine, therefore, we have to make a dictionary of Sudanese places to refer to the linguistic origin and lexical

meaning of each name, which is the work of the committee for Dictionaries.

This committee has the task of providing organized and true geographical information - and setting them in systematic way that makes it easy to researchers and scholar to find the names of geographical place via the axis of their locations.

✓ The committee works on collecting and classifying the names and putting them in indexes and dictionaries of the names of places in Sudan, as well as uniforming the terms and definition that are related to geographical names.

✓ Among the aims of this committee is to state the location of every place on the map with its axis and to facilitate the approach of security authorities to the places.

6/ Maps of Sudan used to, and still do, show geographical names that no longer exist. We notice that some of them on Sudanese, and even international maps, were changed, (Um Dubban) has become (Um Dawwan Ban), (Um Baddah) has become (New Omdurman), (El Thawra) has become (El Mahdia) and (Idd El-Ghanam "Goats Well") has become (Idd El-Fursan "Knights' Well), and some states have appeared with new names which were not known or written down in maps inside or outside the Sudan nor found in Atlases, so it was necessary to have standards to refer to in thinking about changing or giving a name that does not exist in maps.

There are also maps that began to appear out of the administration of the central are and without the knowledge of

the national committee for geographical names. These maps are full of spelling mistakes and wrong information of axes.

In many of the new forming areas we hear names of foreign Arabic and non-Arabic places given to the new areas; as: Korea, Ryadh, and Taif, or odd names give to these new area. We sometimes even hear a nice name give to an area and then given in the same time to another one or many other areas in the same State, as: (Dar El-Salam) west of Omdurman, (Dar-El- Salam) south of Khartoum and a third one in El-Bageir; how is this let to happen? Is it not better to have a law or standards for giving the names of new areas; while to our country is in an unstopping progress in buildings? This is of the concern of the committee of Building Features.

The quick development in information fields makes it necessary to the information of maps to be updating, especially in a country as wide as Sudan. One of the most important aims of this committee is to contribute to imposing the referential value of maps and official jobs, and to work for giving names to the areas which were not officially named before. It is also concerned with correcting names inside the country and unifroming and limiting geographical names.

8/ There is still the problem of giving names to the areas between Sudan and the nine neighboring countries while the borders are mostly natural features (mountains, streams, valleys or islands in the sea). We now hear of conflicts about borders which caused wars between the neighbors. Is it not better that

we point who is to give the names of natural features between Sudan and other countries? When we know that we have many islands in the sea, we have to, immediately, give Sudanese names to them and prove their being Sudanese before they become points of conflicts between us and our neighbors. The absence of geographical information can cause a big confusion inside the country and outside, affecting the borders of localities and provinces inside, and our borders with the neighboring countries outside. This committee is concerned with naming the features that were not named, as we know the conflicts that result of not pointing the names of barrier features between countries as well as participating in giving the names of rocky areas in regional and international waters and giving names to the bottom of the sea in such regions.

9/ These are some of the tasks and problems which are supposed to be treated by this committee, guided by the views of scholars and experts in languages and history and those who are concerned with security and the borders and diplomats as well as state committees. It is necessary that there be cooperation with these institutions represented by the committee and other ones which had no representatives in the committee, as the universities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

10/ Finally: we hope that this committee be provided with all the support that help to do their national mission sufficiently when we can know the gross responsibility and its relation to the security and safety of the country and its identity as well as its civil progress.

التصنيف حسب

نظام نقل الحروف العربية الى الحروف الرومانية

الحرف العربي	الحرف الروماني	الحرف العربي	الحرف الروماني
أ	A	ب	B
ب	B	ج	J
ت	T	ح	H
ث	Th	خ	Kh
د	D	ذ	Dh
ر	R	ز	Z
س	S	ش	Sh
ص	S	ض	Dh
ط	T	ظ	Dh
ع	C	غ	Gh
ف	F		
ق	Q		
ك	K		
ل	L		
م	M		
ن	N		
هـ	H		
و	W		
ي	Y		
ا	a	اتحة مصورة	
ب	b	فتحة طويلة	
ت	t	الف ممدودة	
ث	th	الف مأمصرة	
د	d	ضممة مصورة	
ر	r	ضممة طويلة	
س	s	كسرة مصورة	
ش	sh	كسرة طويلة	
ص	s	همزة	
ط	t		
ظ	dh		
ع	c		
غ	gh		
ف	f		

AL

ASH-SH

العثماني

العثماني

العثماني

ملحوظات

Latin Letter

Arabic

b

ب

t

ت

th

ث

j

ج

h

ح

kh

خ

d

د

dh

ذ

r

ر

z

ز

s

س

sh

ش

s

ص

d

ض

t

ط

z

ظ

c

ع

gh

غ

f

ف

q

ق

k

ك

l

ل

فضلنا الخط تحت الحرف
عوضا عن النقط لأن النقطة
في الخرائط لها دلالة خاصة
وخشينا أن تؤدي النقطة إلي
لبس في قراءة الخريطة

تكتب فوق السطر

	m	م
	n	ن
	h	هـ
(غير المدية - شبه الحركة)	w	و
(غير المدية - شبه الحركة)	y	ى

:The non Arabic Letter

Latin Letter

The amended ArabicLetter

p

پ

ch

چ

v

ف

g

گ

ž

ژ

(ng)ŋ

غ

(ny)ñ

ن