



## **Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General

26 June 2007

Original: English

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### **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.**

#### **National Activities on Standardization of Iranian Geographical Names**

Submitted by Iran\*\*

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\* E/CONF.98/1.

\*\* Prepared by the Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names, Iran.



# National Activities on Standardization of Iranian Geographical Names



## Introduction

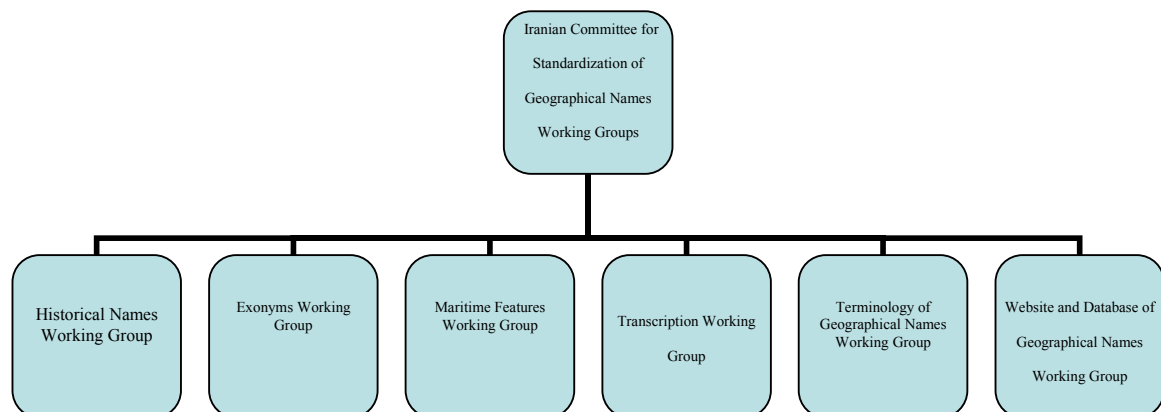
As it is known by the presiding board and its honorable members, from nearly the early years the United Nations conference on standardization of geographical names has been formed, Islamic Republic of Iran has cooperated with it while attempting to promote the activities related to the above mentioned task in Iran. Iran, in 8<sup>th</sup> conference on standardization of geographical names, has submitted a comprehensive report on related activities on standardization of geographical names. However, in the twenty – second session (New York) and twenty – third sessions (Vienna), Iran has submitted detailed and separate reports on the activities accomplished after establishment of committee of experts on standardization of geographical names. Holding regional meetings, Islamic Republic of Iran has made great efforts on coordinating activities of this type across the region. The followings are among the most significant activities done by Islamic Republic of Iran after 8<sup>th</sup> conference.

## 1– Establishment of Specialist Working Groups within Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names (ICSNG)

After the 8<sup>th</sup> conference ( Berlin 2002 ) , the necessity of establishment of working groups in order to promote the activities in relation to the subject of standardization of Iranian geographical names has been recognized more than ever , for the former activities in this field have been carried out rather separately and were not coherent enough . Accordingly, based on the decision made by Iranian Toponymy Committee six working groups were founded each of which led by an expert in related area. Additionally, within every group, several people are acting as colleagues. The mentioned groups are as follows:

- **Transcription Working Group**
- **Website and Database of Geographical Names Working Group**
- **Historical Names Working Group**
- **Terminology of Geographical Names Working Group**
- **Exonyms Working Group**
- **Maritime Names and Sea Beds Working Group**

Figure1. Iranian Committee for standardization of Geographical Names Working Groups



It is worthy to mention that six above mentioned working groups are continuing activities under supervision of Toponymy Committee led by National Cartography Center (NCC).

The momentous activities done by Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names Working Groups after Berlin (2002) conference are as stated below:

### 1-1 Transcription Working Group

Geographical Names Transcription Working Group, as one of the six working groups of Toponymy Committee is responsible for compiling notebook of instruction and manual of Iranian transcription system. After several meetings, this group has represented its results to the Toponymy Committee in different stages the outcome of which, at first step, was ratifying the generalities of Iranian transcription system. The group, after this stage, concentrated all the efforts on compiling notebook of instruction and manual of Iranian transcription system, the product of which was ratified at thirty – second session of Toponymy Committee.

Making records of geographical names has been noticed by the group in three dissimilar ways including:

1. Narrow transcription (used in geographical names database, and by researchers especially linguists)
2. Broad(phonemic) transcription (used in database, on maps, and by any other non – experts)
3. Transliteration (used in geographical names database, and also by interested researchers)

Ratifying the instruction, all Iranian geographical names should be recorded and documented based on this system which will provide a deserving help to standardization of Iranian geographical names.

In this way, according to resolution approved by specialist Toponymy Committee, Iranian transcription system has been complied scientifically, the basis of which is the transcription

system. In this case, it is worth mentioning that this system has been utilized for transcribing more than 70000 names present in Iranian geographical names database as well as on some maps.

The above mentioned procedure represented in the form of a separate report in twenty-second meeting on standardization of geographical names held in New York ( 2004 ) .

Regarding the point that Iran has a great variety of dialects and languages in different regions, a comprehensive instruction was provided and submitted in UN's twenty – third meeting (Vienna 2006) for transcribing those phones for which there were no suggested item in former instruction.

This was a complementary instruction to the former one for transcription of all geographical names present in all regions of Iran.

## **1-2 Website and Database of Geographical Names Working Group**

The activities of this working group are continuing in two following parts:

### **1-2-1 Database of Geographical Names**

Collecting, documenting, transcribing and finally standardizing the names of all geographical features are among the most significant objectives of ICSGN. Establishing a database in which the features name of different regions through country can be searched, and besides getting access to correct pronunciation of features name, other characteristics related to its location can be obtained. It was a necessity for all organizations that would facilitate communication, business, programming and providing maps and atlases as well.

The overall procedures of Iranian Geographical Name Database are represented as below:

- Establishing suitable structure for geographical names database,
- Providing the software of Name database,
- Entering the information related to names into database.

Among the stated procedures, the two first ones have been completed and the working group is at third stage, namely, entering information related to names.

The utilized sources in order to entering information into geographical names database are as follows:

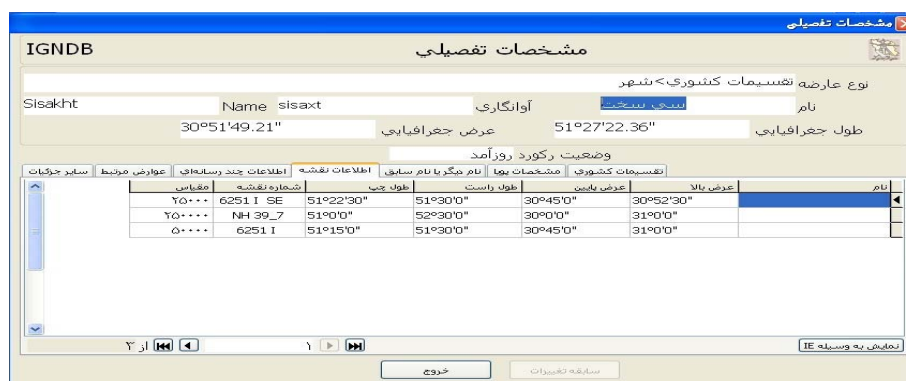
- 1: 25000 maps,
- Classified and naming aerial photos,
- Names cards,
- File of national topographic database NTDB for each region,
- Digital maps of country divisions,
- Available gazetteers,
- The list of geographical names adapted by Interior Ministry.

At this stage, all information related to geographical names has been entered into the system in 1: 25000 scale. The information includes:

- Name of feature,
- Type of feature,
- Transcription,
- Coordinates,
- Country divisions,
- Place of feature in coverage maps,
- GNDB code,
- NTDB code,
- Special code of feature,
- Name of information collector,
- English name,
- Height,
- Information controller.

It is worthy to note that, for the time being, about 70000 geographical names and their related characteristics have been entered into the database, and the search of which is possible in different ways at the same time.

Figure2. Perspective of searching result of a name in Iranian geographical names database



## 1-2-2 Website of Iranian Committee on Naming and Standardization of Geographical Names

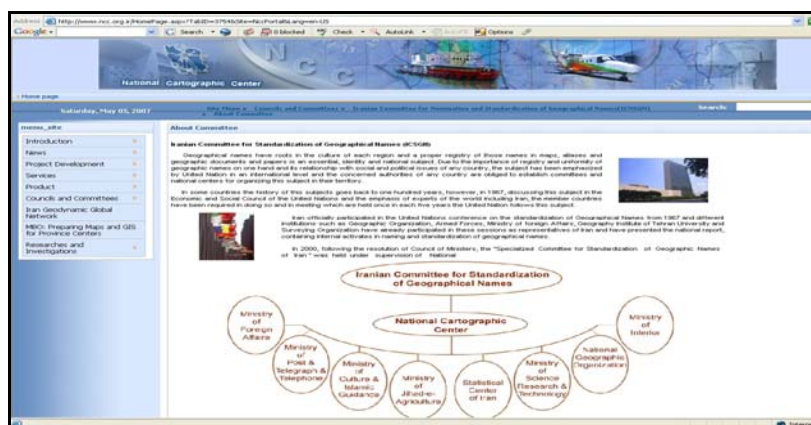
One of the working groups of Toponymy Committee is website and database of Iranian geographical names. The duties turned over to this group includes totally designing website of toponymy committee and establishing the geographical name database. It is worth mentioning that all activities carried out by the committee have been put in this website. Beside the activities of working groups, in this website, the transcription system ratified by toponymy committee is in access. Accordingly, people from different regions of Iran and world can, use the transcription system, and transcribe the name of geographical features. In addition, some facilities have been foreseen to be provided for those who want to connect the leaders of each

working group. Search for geographical names is another important part of this website, in such a way that if someone searches a specific geographical name, he would be able to find it through the website. By means of these facilities, it could be possible to access geographical locations, proper pronunciation, type of feature, its position in country divisions, other names, name changing and ..., names of cities, villages and all geographical features.

Also, above questions could be asked in different ways such as coordinates, type of feature, name of feature and .... It should be stated that some parts of the website have been completed and other parts are going to be prepared. At last, it is necessary to point out that the latest activities on standardization of geographical names are available on website for those who are interested in the subject.

The website address is: <http://geonames.ncc.org.ir>

Figure3. A Website page of Iranian Committee on Naming and Standardization of Geographical Names



### 1-3 Historical Names Working Groups

During latest centuries, there are a lot of Iranian historical names undergone some changes for many reasons and therefore their present forms, structures and pronunciations are different from those which were common in a specific period of time in the past . Regarding that historical names are recognized as human heritage in resolution adapted by 8<sup>th</sup> UN conference on Standardization of geographical names (Berlin 2002) these names have been considered as prior activity of toponymy committee. In this way, historical names working group has initiated its activities on these names.

The group has a comprehensive program for gathering and documenting historical geographical names which will be described later.

#### 1-3-1 Short – Term Program

Providing information bank and bibliography of books, articles, reports, M.A and PHD

theses as well as articles published in scientific & cultural journals on Iranian geographical names are included in this part.

### **1-3-2 Medium Term Program**

Making list of geographical names using “*Great Persian Encyclopedia*”, “*Encyclopedia of Islamic world*” as well as “*Shiite Encyclopedia*” and “*Masaheb Persian Encyclopedia*” ( 3 volumes ).

This list will provide the following geographical names orderly:

- Name of historical cities ,
- Name of Iranian important historical villages ,
- Name of Iranian significant rivers ,
- Name of Iranian significant historical mountains and natural features ,
- Name of Iranian significant historical plains and plateau
- Name of Iranian historical monuments and ancient precincts inside and outside of Iran in realm of Iranian world.

### **1-3-3 Long – Term Program**

Providing encyclopedia of historical geographical names:

The case includes providing and running a program in which the existing sources are used to supply encyclopedic articles, and, using information bank of compilers as well as the present sources. The members of editorial board of encyclopedia of Iranian historical-geographical names will be elected in this program. Beside Iranian professors, researchers, compilers and scholars, in this activity, the professors and scholars from neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Tajikistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Uzbekistan and Iraq would be invited.

By the time being, this group has compiled two volumes of geographical names encyclopedia, the first volume contains letter *a* and second one contains *b, p, t, s, g* letters (Persian alphabetical order).

These two volumes have following features:

The first volume (letter *a*) in 273 pages includes 110 pages compiled articles on the subject of Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf. In fact, these articles have been compiled along with the committee’s objectives. In addition, the existing information provided by encyclopedias is about some geographical features of mountains (Alborz, Alvand, Oshtorankuh) and Orumiyeh

and Parishan Lakes as well. It is worth mentioning that other historical names are foreseen to be prepared by the committee in future.

### 1-4 Terminology of Geographical Names Working Group

Precise usage of terminologies utilized in standardization of geographical names is of great importance. These terminologies must be used correctly and their equivalents must be recognized precisely.

According to its approved duties, the Terminology Working Group has initiated its activities. Led by experts in linguistics, geography and terminology, the group has started translating terminologies of geographical names. The group considered as its main objective the translation of the last version of “*The List of Terminologies of Geographical Names*” printed in 2002 which was provided by Terminology of Geographical Names Working Group of UN and printed in six different languages of UN. The list includes 375 contemporary terminologies of standardization of geographical names. Some of these terminologies have scientific definitions in Persian. Some of others have been offered by some Persian translators from which the terminology working group has chosen the most common ones. The group, in translating terminologies, had regarded the English list as its pattern like UN procedure and translation of other lists has been done from English to those languages. The third type of these terminologies have no Persian equivalents and used in their original forms. These terminologies are very new in Persian scientific language and hardly found in scientific texts. Although it is not among the duties given to the group, it has found some equivalents for them as far as possible.

The group hopes to complete these terminologies in future. It should be mentioned that the necessity of completing the work was felt during the time of translating and compiling of this dictionary. The group has attempted to use common terminologies in scientific community and has suggested the word such as "آب نام" in some cases for hydronym. Today various branches of toponymy such as Hydronymy, Oronymy and Iconymy have their own particular terminologies which can be used to complete this dictionary. However, compiling a descriptive dictionary would be helpful for those who are involved and interested in this field.

Table1. Some terminologies of geographical names

Terminology	Persian equivalent	Definition
acronym	اسم اختصاری	Word which has been made from initial letters of a phrases, for example SOWTO (South West Township), UNGENG, Rad
address	آدرس، عنوان	Computerized place in which a special case is saved



allograph	نویسه گونه	Each of the graphic forms representing a letter for example in English ff, ph, gb representing /f/ form and [ f ]sound. In Germany ss= sz= b ä = æ
allomorph	تکواژ گونه	Two or more different phonemic forms representing one phoneme, for example <i>es</i> in boxes and <i>en</i> in oxen are different plural forms

### 1-5 Exonym Working Group

Providing a list of countries names based on the resolutions ratified in UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) has been among the objectives sought by ICSGN. Therefore, by establishing Exonymy Working Group, the activities of this group were initiated using all existing sources. Over 192 countries names stated in UN list were investigated and the group attempted to gather correct information about these country names. After examining its content and proof reading, finally the list was ratified by toponymy committee as the first volume of countries names list. This list includes valuable information for mass Medias, cartographers, atlas makers, book compilers, and ministries as well as all organizations and people involved in countries names and are looking for a reliable standard source. The list includes information about countries not mentioned in existing sources in Iran. One of the characteristics of this list is that it has been prepared based on names ratified in UN conference on standardization of geographical names. Actually, these names are the only reliable references in this field. The list includes following information about each country:

- Official name (includes names in official communities and documents),
- Complete names of countries,
- Common names of countries in Iran (usually used in Iran),
- Endonym,
- Official language,
- International abbreviated code of each country,
- Name of country in Persian dialect as well as its transcription,
- Official name of each country capital in Persian dialect and its transcription.

The above list has been submitted to the members in 23<sup>rd</sup> UN meeting on geonames.

### 1-6 Maritime Names and Sea Beds Working Group

This group is recognizing marine and sub-marine features along the Northern and Southern

seacoasts. A list of marine and submarine names will soon be submitted to committee of naming and standardization of geographical names. As there is no suitable name for some marine geographical features in Iran, the group has submitted a list of names for these features. These names were invented in cooperation with Persian Academy of Language and Literature.

## 2– Holding Meetings and Exhibitions on Standardization of Iranian Geographical Names as well as Regional Meetings.

These meetings were held in National Cartography Center on May 2003 and November 2005. In these meetings, some papers investigating the political, economical, social and historical aspects of the geographical names were presented. Holding these meetings also made insiders and researchers familiar with activities on standardization of Iranian geographical names.

The third meeting was held in three separate sessions discussing:

- Persian Gulf name,
- Standardization of Geographical names,
- Historical & Geographical Names

The meeting was welcomed so greatly that many articles were displayed in the form of posters. An exhibition also was held simultaneously which includes historical maps and activities done by different organizations and ministries in relation with standardization of geographical names.

Figure4. Poster of 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on standardization of geographical names



A regional meeting on standardization of geographical names was held on 21 – 22 November 2003 in Tehran at National Cartography Center by the presence of representatives from Cyprus, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey and Azerbaijan. A comprehensive report of the

meeting along with its resolutions was submitted in twenty – second UN regional meeting.

### **3– Holding Training Courses**

In order to standardized of Iranian geographical names, teaching the process of gathering, documenting, and transcribing geographical names according to instructions and manuals, is among the objectives searched by Toponymy Committee. To fulfill this objective the short – term training courses have been held in which trainees learned how to gather, document and transcribe geographical names. As there are many organizations involved in geographical names in Iran, holding such training courses seemed necessary to the insiders to become more familiar. The Toponymy Committee has also held these courses. It should be stated that some short – term training courses are now being held regularly in National Cartography Center in which the transcription is trained. Toponymy Committee is going to hold the courses more completely in future.

In order to familiarize students with standardization of geographical names more than before, they have been programmed to learn geographical names in related academic courses. Accordingly, training various aspects related to geographical names is planned.

### **4– Transcribing Names of Elements and Units of Country Divisions**

Transcribing names of elements and units of country divisions has always been objective of this committee. Actually, wide use of these names in Medias, correspondence and documents, has made to transcribe these names. Therefore, Toponymy Committee is transcribing nearly 7000 names which will be on website of committee for public display.

### **5– Providing Computerized Data Reference Base for Rural Areas of Iran**

#### **(Dictionary of Iranian villages)**

Information Bank of Iranian villages' dictionary provides all information about villages which present in censuses, official culture, and diaries. The recent examined censuses include 13 periods of censuses as well as published geographical dictionaries.

### **6– Other Activities**

- Holding several meetings with concerned organizations in order to coordinate the activities related to gathering, and documenting of geographical names. While all

concerned organizations take part, these meetings are held to put the problems of standardization of geographical names forward and suggest suitable solutions.

- Providing, completing and publishing gazetteer of villages including Khuzestan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Hormozgan, Kordestan, Khorasan-e-Razavi, and Khorasan-e-Shomali with 12758 geographical names .
- Providing and completing the gazetteer of rivers based on river basins in 5 volume including 1400 geographical names,
- Documenting more than 1920 new and changed names,
- Changing the names of coverage maps in 1:50000 scale including 130 geographical names,
- Collecting the geographical information of country frontiers including 12173 geographical names,
- Map making using transcription system ratified by the committee,
- Compiling the book “*Iranian hydronyms*” which discusses theoretical and practical issues of Iranian hydronyms