

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

New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012

Item 8(b) of the provisional agenda*

National standardization:

Office treatment of names

Brief Introduction of the Planning of Geographical Names in China

Submitted by China**

* E/CONF.101/1.

** Prepared by Shang Weifan (China), Deputy Director, of China Institute of Toponymy, and Liu Lianan (China), Researcher of China Institute of Toponymy

Brief Introduction of the Planning of Geographical Names in China

Prepared by: Shang Weifan (China), Deputy Director, of China Institute of Toponymy, and Liu Lianan (China), Researcher of China Institute of Toponymy

Along with the acceleration of China's urbanization, groups of systematical geographical names are needed to be designed for the renovation of old city areas, the expansion of urban areas and new cities. In the recent 10 years, China started the planning of geographical names in the cities of or above middle scale. The main practices of the planning are as follows.

Restraint mechanisms

In China, the planning of geographical names is led by the local government and adhered to the current management and technique standard. Based on the overall urban planning, designers will cooperate with the local planning department, relevant experts and the residents of the city. The planning is neither an individual behavior, nor a commercial transaction. Once the planning is accomplished, it will be approved to implement by the local government.

Three characteristics

The three outstanding characteristics of geographical names' planning are as follows: "systematicness" which is embodied by the integral standardization of all the geographical names within an area, "foresight" which is embodied by the beforehand naming of various newly-born geographical entities within an area, "initiative" which is embodied by considering kinds of elements which related to changes of geographical names during the staging period. Because of the planning of geographical names, the naming and renaming of the geographical entities, which used to be an isolated, passive and random measure, has been changed to a scientific act.

Basic rules

There are five rules to be obeyed when deciding a name of a new place. Those are: the geographical names should match the reality, be formal and in order, highlight the culture, suit both refined and popular tastes, and easy to be found and remembered. Two of these five basic rules are essential. The first is the names should match the reality, which means the newly-drafted geographical name is suitable for the characteristics, the condition and the usage of the geographical entity. The second is the geographical name is easy to be found and remembered. It means people should fully utilize the mark function and the association function of the area's conspicuous scenic spots when drafting a geographical name.

Acts according to circumstances

When the old urban area has been renovated according to the modern standard, its previous geographical names are not enough and suitable any more. So we should make some adjustments. The adjustments include the reservation, the replacement and the integration of the old geographical names. The newly-built urban areas, which expand to the rural areas and especially in the independent new cities, need a complete set of special-designed geographical names. The planning of geographical names of the whole city will be the basis of naming and renaming. The related details of special

planning such as protection for ancient geographical names and signs of geographical names should be consistent with the planning of the area.

The key points of preparation

When we plan a whole set of geographical names for a city, we should first understand the overall planning of a city and make a deep research about its history and culture. Then based on the functions, we divide a city into different districts and use the names of crisscrossing streets as framework. Finally, we can attach some important geographical names to hills, rivers, lakes, islands, moreover to highly-concentrated public facilities such as residences, schools, stores, hotels, theaters, bus stations, airports and so on.

The important points for attention

When we compile the planning of the geographical names, we should also have some specific issues handled well. For instance, unique style is considered to be good in naming geographical places, the native materials are preferable. When naming a modern place with a name of an ancient place, we should assure that the scale and direction of the two places is similar. The generic terms do not have to be unified, because we should consider the local customs. In order to highlight the differences, the specific elements should be derived from obvious geographical entities as much as possible. The words used in the geographical names should be in accordance with the real condition of the geographical entities, and ambiguities should be avoided in dialects.

Updating regularly

Although the planning of geographical names has been released, the stability of geographical names is not absolute. The main reasons for some slight changes of geographical names after planning are as follows—the regular amendment of the overall urban planning, the changes of geographical entities which are the basis of geographical names, and the variation on the concepts of human geography. Therefore, the planning of geographical names is not a one-time act, and it needs timely amendment.