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**Reports by Governments on the situation in their
countries and on the progress made in the
standardization of geographical names since the Ninth Conference
(for distribution only).**

National Activities for Production, Dissemination, and
Use of Geographical Names

Submitted by Islamic Republic of Iran **

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In the name of God

Islamic Republic of Iran National Activities for Production, Dissemination, and Use of Geographical Names

Introduction

As mentioned in the related reports and records, the Islamic Republic of Iran has properly interacted with the United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names (UNSCGN) since the early years of its establishment and has always taken into consideration the decisions and recommendations made by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

Iranian Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names (ICSGN), led by National Cartographic Center (NCC), is in charge of directing activities in the area of production, distribution, and standard use of correct geographical names at national and regional levels. Also, different working groups of ICSGN are collaborating with corresponding working groups in UNGEGN.

The outcome of Iranian continuous efforts has been reflected in international conferences and meetings on standardization of geographical names. Here, a review of major efforts made since the last conference is presented:

1- Digital data collection and registration on geographical names during field works

National Cartographic Center of Iran performs office treatments and field operations with considerable care and skills required for classifying geographical features and registering place names on aerial photos and maps, particularly in production of 1:25,000 topographic maps.

Previously, the operations were based on conventional methods for manual recording of data on printed aerial photos or paper maps (hard copies) using such instruments as pocket stereoscopes, technical pens (Rapidograph Pens), and other tools employed in feature annotation.

NCC experts completed a project on digital data collection and registration of geographical names during field operations, after expert studies.

A special software for annotation of features in photos and maps was developed based on the results of this project. Use of the software and special hardware resulted in significant reduction in error for data registration of geographical names.

2- Preparing the first volume of Iranian Geographical Names Gazetteer

The first volume of the gazetteer was prepared as a prototype. The main difference between this gazetteer and others published in Iran is that the previously published gazetteers contained only the names of villages, rivers, and mountains in separate volumes. However, this new version presents names for a larger number of natural and manmade features. Over 100 types of geographical features found in 1:25,000 maps were considered in the gazetteer.

In the gazetteer, geographical features were classified into five groups: vegetation, administrative divisions, transportation and hydrographic features, public places, and hypsography. Information such as original Persian name, transcription, names written by English letters, other names, coordinates and administrative divisions, map sheet number in 1:25,000 maps, and feature type were presented. These data were extracted from Iranian National Geographical Names Database.

3- Completing and constant updating of Iranian National Geographic Data Base (INGDB)

INGNDB currently consists of 120,000 data records available to users online. Major services provided to users include:

- Searching and retrieving data based on the name of places or geographical features;
- Searching and retrieving data based on the coordinates of places or geographical features;
- Searching and retrieving data based on administrative divisions;
- Searching and retrieving data based on marking on maps.

Currently, Iranian national Geo-database retrieves and displays place names data through interoperability with INGNDB.

In order to provide consistency in geographical data related to the names of cities and rural areas in INGNDB, the data provided by this database are compared and matched to data available in administrative division documents approved by Islamic Republic of Iran Ministry of Interior as well as the database in Statistics Center of Iran.

4- Promoting website of Iranian Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names (ICSGN)

In its early stages of operation, the website was a service-based site designed and implemented to provide access to Iranian National Geographical Names Data Base (INGNDB). Therefore, users usually used this website as a user interface to search and retrieve data organized in INGNDB by making use of different criteria.

The new approach adopted by ICSGN called for upgrading with focus on providing information. Consequently, and in order to realize such goals as institutionalizing correct writing and pronunciation of place and feature name data, promoting the use of standard geographical names, and developing and reinforcing links between organizations and working groups, changes were implemented in both structure and form of the website.

5- Publicity and dissemination of information

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) brochure was translated into Persian. The brochure is now available on the UNGEGN publications website. Inspired by the UNGEGN brochure, Persian and English brochures for Iranian Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names (ICSGN) were designed and prepared. The brochures are available in ICSGN website. In addition, hard copies of the brochures are distributed as well.

Furthermore, the secretariat of Iranian committee disseminates news on activities as well as national and regional achievements on geographical names standardization via UNGEGN Bulletin (e.g. Bulletin No. 41, October 2011).

6- Launching a project for collecting and recording geographical names of urban streets and places in Iran

Preparing 1:2000 topographical maps of Iranian cities, under the direction and supervision of National Cartographic Center, created an opportunity for exploring the process of collecting data on names of urban features such as names of streets and neighborhoods as well as urban places and centers with different uses. For this purpose, a stylebook was developed for use by organizations, particularly editors of maps and geo data, in standard collection and registration of names of urban features.

The project for collecting and recording names of urban places and streets in Iran was launched based on guidelines and directions provided by NCC. Of course, the data collected in this project will be added to National Geographical Names Database.

7- Cultural heritage preservation

In order to preserve historical names as intangible cultural heritage, Historical Names Working Group of Iranian Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names gathers data on the background of place names from different history resources. Data gathered so far on the background on different places have been added to National Geographical Names Database. In future, these data will be made available to web users for search and data retrieval.

8- Preparing a list of country names

Iranian Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names (ICSGN), in cooperation with related working group in the UNGEGN, has prepared a list of country names in Persian. The list, which is available on the ICSGN website, helps standardization of country names used in maps, atlases, and databases.

In addition to data items supplied by UNGEGN, the list provides descriptive information (attribute data) as well as country maps.

9- Toponymic Guideline of Iran

Toponymic Guideline for Geographical Names in Iran is almost complete. The titles and topics of the guideline are based on the latest samples published by UNGEGN.

10- Efforts made to get approval for new Persian Romanization System from the Working Group on Romanization Systems of UNGEGN

New Persian Romanization System (Transcription System), proposed by Iranian Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names, was once again raised in a meeting of United Nations Working Group on Romanization Systems (WGRS), a side event of the 26th UNGEGN Session. A series of correspondence and negotiations with the working group followed to get approval for the proposed Romanization System. In a meeting with attendance of Dr. Peeter Paul (convenor of WGRS), as a side event of 5th National Conference on Geographical Names held on April 25, 2012, in Tehran, opinions of WGRS members as well as joint approaches were discussed.

The issue was also discussed in WGRS meeting in Gdansk, Poland. In this meeting, Iranian delegates presented their arguments for proposing the Persian Romanization method.

11- Names of maritime features

National Cartographic Center of Iran used the data provided in 1:100,000 hydrographic maps to create a maritime database for southern water bodies in Iran. The names provided for this database are planned to be added to Iranian National Geographical Names Database so that users will be able to search and retrieve maritime names.

12- Constant monitoring and control over use and dissemination of correct geographical names

Iranian Committee on Standardization of Geographical Names not only encourages use and publication of correct and approved geographical names by executive bodies and media, but also constantly monitors use and publication of the names. In addition, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a member of the committee, adopts required diplomatic measures and actions to prevent use and publication of incorrect and fake names abroad.

13- National Conferences on Geographical Names

National Cartographic Center (NCC) of Iran held the 5th National Conference on Geographical Names, in cooperation with academic centers and other executive bodies, in May 2012, at NCC Headquarters, to promote consistent and standard use of correct geographical names.

In this conference, researchers, university professors and students, and experts presented their articles on methods and technologies concerning to standard spelling, pronunciation, and registration of place names. They also discussed challenges and approaches on usage and publication of correct geographical names.

A notable character of this conference was its comprehensive scientific content which covered different areas of functions and applications of geographical names. In this one-day conference, thirteen papers were presented through lectures while 32 articles were presented by posters.

In a side event, an exhibit was held with contribution of public and private organizations, societies, and academic centers involved with geographical names. In this exhibit, visitors were presented with books, maps, publications, documents, software, and hardware related to geographical names.

14- Regional meetings of the Asia south-west division (other than Arabic)

Islamic Republic of Iran, as chair of Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) encourages regional activities in the related aspects within the division, through technical meetings, correspondence, etc.

The eighth and the ninth regional meetings were held in 2008 and 2011, respectively, to discuss issues on standardization of geographical names. During the sessions, experts from the member states convened to discuss approaches to regional standardization of geographical names as well as exchange and dissemination of standard names at regional level. Reports of the meeting have been submitted to the UNGEGN.

15- Participation in United Nations conferences and meetings (since 2007)

Delegates of the Islamic Republic of Iran have actively participated in the 9th conference in New York, the 25th Session of UNGEGN in Nairobi, the 26th Session of UNGEGN in Vienna, and the 12th Session of United Nations Working Group on Exonyms in Poland. In addition to presenting academic papers, Iranian participants reported regional and national activities on progressing standardization of geographical names.

16- Activities by other public and private organizations involved with geographical names

16-1 using names of cities and rural areas, available in the database of Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) in 2011 Population and Housing Census and updating geographical names data in this database based on information provided by census officers;

16-2 organizing and updating postal places data in Iranian Postal Database, the database stores variety of data including names of cities and villages which can be used in providing postal services; Addresses of postal places in this database have standard structures;

16-3 publication of "History of Administrative Divisions in Iran" in several volumes by Iranology Foundation, the book contains names of places and units in administrative division in different periods. In addition, "Cities of Iran" was published in several volumes providing etymological information for city names in Iran;

16-4 preparing and publishing geographical glossaries and gazetteers for cities and villages of Iran, atlases for forests and deserts, general Iran and world atlases, geographical educational charts, road maps, and Gitashenasi Encyclopedia which contains over 30,000 names for geographical features and places, urban and provincial maps, thematic maps and so on, by other geographic and cartographic institutions in Iran.