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Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

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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 Ninth Conference (for distribution only)

National report of Sri Lanka

Summary**

Geographical names play a significant role in Sri Lanka, as in any other country, in historical, cultural, economic, administrative, ethnic, religious and linguistic matters.

During the period under review, a national gazetteer was prepared, containing some 29,600 places and features based on a 1-inch topographic map series completed in 1924 by the Survey Department of Sri Lanka (the national mapping agency). After Sri Lanka began using the metric system of measurement in 1982, a new topographic map series was prepared on the scale 1:50,000. The topographic data in the map series are also available in digital vector form as a topographic vector database for geographic information system applications and digital mapping. Another series of topographic maps on the scale 1:10,000 is being prepared, along with the accompanying topographic vector database. Another development is the publication of a list of villages in each province that is used mainly for cadastral survey purposes.

During the reporting period, a representative of the Survey Department participated, for the first time in the history of Sri Lanka, in the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, attending its twenty-second session. Subsequently, a representative of the Survey Department and the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and one of his staff members participated in the twenty-fourth session of the Group of Experts, which was held in conjunction with the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of

* E/CONF.101/1.

** The full report was prepared by S. M. W. Fernando, Surveyor General of Sri Lanka, and is available in the language of submission only from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEgn/ungegnConf10.html>.



Geographical Names. In 2011, two representatives of the Survey Department participated in the twenty-sixth session of the Group of Experts. As can be seen, there has been significant continuity of participation in the Group of Experts by Sri Lanka since 2004.

During the period under review, Sri Lanka made significant progress in the standardization of geographical names by obtaining the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers to establish a committee for the standardization of geographical names in Sri Lanka under the chairship of the Surveyor General. Permanent staff and members of the committee are now being appointed. In 2011, the Survey Department obtained approval to appoint an officer at the rank of Deputy Surveyor General to coordinate activities, and a separate branch has been established in the Survey Department to undertake work on the standardization of geographical names. It is evident that Sri Lanka has made slow but steady progress in this field.
