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**11<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 8 -17 August 2017

Item 5 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 10<sup>th</sup> Conference (for distribution only).**

**National Activities on Standardization of Malaysia Geographical Names**

Submitted by Malaysia \*\*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report from Malaysia covers the period since the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference and includes all activities relating to geographical names, the progress reports on the Working Groups, projects undertaken and other related matters.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The Malaysian National Committee on Geographical Names (MNCGN), established on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2002 by the Malaysian Cabinet, is responsible in coordinating of the geographical naming activities in Malaysia. This committee is chaired by the Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia (JUPEM) with its members consisting of representatives from Federal and State agencies. One (1) Technical Committee and three (3) Working Groups were established to assist the MNCGN as follows:

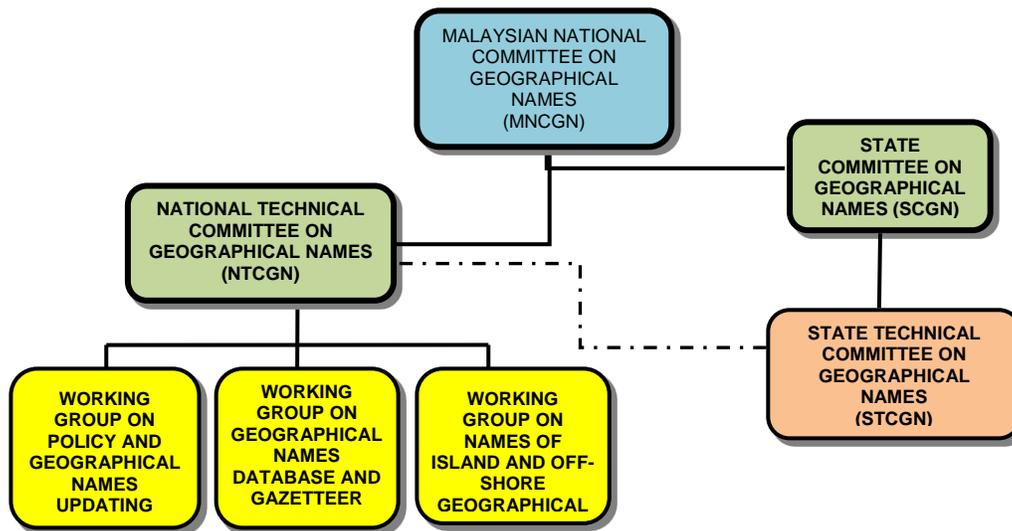
- i. National Technical Committee on Geographical Names (NTCGN);
- ii. Working Group on Policy and Geographical Names Updating (new working group which replaced previous working group on Guidelines for Determination of Geographical Names);
- iii. Working Group on Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer; and
- iv. Working Group on Names of Island and Off-Shore Geographical Entities.

At the State level, the State Committee on Geographical Names (SCGN) was established to coordinate and implement the guidelines and procedures formulated by MNCGN. This committee is chaired by the State Secretary or the Secretary General of Ministry of Federal Territories (for Federal Territories) and its members comprise of representatives from state or federal agencies. At the state level, the State Technical Committee on Geographical Names (STCGN) was also established to assist the SCGN.

The responsibilities of MNCGN encompass the following tasks:

- i. Formulating national guidelines for the determination of geographical names;
- ii. Developing the National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer;
- iii. Promoting the use of official names; and
- iv. Coordinating the input of national nomenclature activities with those at the international level, including serving as liaison to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), particularly with the Regional Grouping.

The existing organizational structure of MNCGN is as shown below:



Terms of reference for MNCGN are as follows:

- i. To study and establish criteria used to determine official geographical names in the national interest;
- ii. To study and formulate the Guidelines for the Formation of the National Geographical Names Database;
- iii. To determine whether the objectives, functions and output of activities are in line with the requirements of the government and country;
- iv. To study and establish the methodologies for the activities of the on-line Geographical Names, National Gazetteer, National Standard Document and other activities relating to geographical names; and
- v. To collaborate with the National Mapping and Spatial Data Committee, Technical Committee 2 (TC2) SIRIM and other committees connected with the formation of the national geographical information infrastructure.

### 3. ACTIVITIES

The MNCGN holds its meeting at least once a year. The 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of MNCGN was held on 22 March 2017 in Kuala Lumpur. Below are the related activities on geographical naming that were conducted during the period under review.

#### 3.1 4<sup>th</sup> Divisional Meeting Of United Nations Group Of Experts On Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Asia South East

The 4<sup>th</sup> Divisional Meeting of UNGEGN-ASE was held in Kuala Lumpur on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The meeting was attended by member countries from Philippines Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam and Malaysia. All the member countries presented their country report during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, a few resolutions were proposed as below:

- i. The training program will be held in Philippines in conjunction with the 5<sup>th</sup> Divisional Meeting of UNGEGN-ASE Division;

- ii. Indonesia to provide each member countries their respective portion of the Gazetteer and Generic Names Table for updates;
- iii. Member countries to actively contribute to the ASE Division's website;
- iv. Malaysia to upload on the ASE Division's website the guidelines on naming of islands and geographic entities for reference; and
- v. Member countries unable to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> Divisional Meeting will be informed of the Minutes of the Meeting.

### **3.2 National Technical Committee on Geographical Names Meeting**

National Technical Committee on Geographical Names held its 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting on 14 July 2016 in Kuala Lumpur. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Director General of Survey and Mapping Malaysia I. During this meeting, the Working Groups and States Technical Committee presented their activities.

### **3.3 Toponymic Guidelines**

During the 10<sup>th</sup> UNCSGN (United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names) and 27<sup>th</sup> Session of UNGEGN in New York in August 2012, Malaysia was requested to prepare the 'Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors for International Use'.

In accordance with that, Malaysia had prepared the document of 'Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors for International Use' and the final document was sent to Mr. Gerhard Rampl on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to be published in the UNGEGN website as like other countries' published documents. The document has been finalised and edited according to the comments by Mr. Hubert Bergmann who was the previous Coordinator of Toponymic Guidelines for Map under UNGEGN. Mr Gerhard Rampl is proposing that the paper be presented by Malaysian representative during the upcoming '11th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names' to be held from 8 - 17 August 2017 in New York, USA.

### **3.4 Websites on Geographical Names Activities in Malaysia**

#### **a. MNCGN Website**

The Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia (JUPEM) had launched the MNCGN Website named "MyGeoName" in July 2006 and the updating of the website is carried out regularly. This website can be accessed at <https://www.jupem.gov.my/v1/my/mygeonames/utama/> in dual language that is in Malay language and in English language.

The latest update was on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 which includes the updating of liaison officer names of MNCGN and Information Bulletin of UNGEGN released in May 2017.

#### **b. MyGeoName Application**

MyGeoName application was developed to store all geographical names across the country. It was developed to provide reliable information concerning places with location and spelling of geographical names, published in the gazette in a harmonized format for the official use of government, industry and the public. MyGeoName application has been developed by Malaysian Centre for Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MaCGDI), which chairs one of the three (3) Working Groups in MNCGN.

This website can be accessed at <http://standard.mygeoportal.gov.my/geoname/>.

### **3.5 Geographical Names Database and Production of Web Gazetteer**

Geographical Names Database and Production of Web Gazetteer is a geographical names data bank which is used to store names, locations, historical backgrounds and gazette notifications. It contains authoritative records that can be available for government and public use.

The geographic names database benefits are:

- i. To ensure effective communication through consistent use of a proper name of places.
- ii. To support socio-economic development, conservation and national infrastructure;
- iii. To facilitate in locating various communities by establishing consistent use of geographical names
- iv. To preserve the rich heritage of places, whereby each name tells a story and provides a sense of place; and
- v. To identify and reflect culture, heritage and landscape associated with geographic names.

The verification of geographical names database using digital topographical database at a scale of 1:25 000 for Peninsular Malaysia and 1:50 000 and 1:25 000 for the states of Sabah and Sarawak Malaysia is almost completed. There are 63,100 geographical names in a database that have been verified by the states.

At this moment, Malaysia is continuing with the verification of the geographical names using the digital topographical database at a scale of 1:5 000 and 1:10 000 which involved the following features:

- vi. Residential Building;
- vii. Commercial Building;
- viii. Industrial Building;
- ix. Government Building;
- x. Public Building;
- xi. Educational Building;
- xii. Religious Building;
- xiii. Recreational Building;
- xiv. Recreational Area;
- xv. Cemetery Area;
- xvi. Terminal;
- xvii. River;
- xviii. Road;
- xix. Housing Area; and
- xx. Village

### **3.6 Naming of Islands and Off-Shore Geographical Entities**

The Working Group on Names of Islands and Off-Shore Geographical Entities was established on 20 June 2006 and is chaired by the National Hydrographic Centre (NHC).

The tasks of this Working Group are as follows:

- i. Carry out surveys and researches as well as identifying and proposing the naming of islands and off-shore geographic entities which has no names. The proposed names will have to relate to the characteristics of hydrographic entities.
- ii. Identify and collect all related information of islands and off-shore geographic entities including from charts, gazettes, maps, agreements and related documents;
- iii. Document and update the list of islands and geographical entities; and
- iv. Propose new names for existing islands and off-shore geographic entities related to the characteristic of geographical entities in accordance with the guideline for the Standardization of Undersea Feature Names produced by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO).

The status on documentation of Names of Islands and Off-Shore Geographical Entities for each state is as follows:

Status	Document	States
Published	Volume I (New Edition)	Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka
	Volume II (New Edition)	Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Johor
	Volume III (New Edition)	Sabah, Labuan
Waiting for State authorities actions	Volume IV	Sarawak



*Document on the Names of Islands and Geographical Entities*

Summary of naming islands and geographical entities:

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Total</b>
Islands (with names)	871
Islands / geographical entities (without names)	196
Geographical entities (with names)	493

### **3.7 Workshop and Briefing**

The objectives of the workshops and briefings were to disseminate information on Guideline on Determination of Geographical Names and to understand the procedure to use Geographical Names Database. It were also intended to help participants understand the importance of coordinated geographical naming and to populate the Geographical Names Database. In the implementation of GIS project and GIS Database creation for national use or even in the state GIS, geographic names are imperative element for a holistic and comprehensive understanding of location, places and space. These efforts were expected to support the implementation of the Malaysian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MyGDI) initiatives which is undertaken by the Malaysian Centre for Geospatial Data Infrastructure (MaCGDI).

The list of workshops that have been organised are as follows:

- i. Reviewing the Draft of State Gazetteer Document by MaCGDI;
- ii. User Requirement Study to Enhance MyGeoName application by MaCGDI;
- iii. Briefing on National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer by MaCGDI;
- iv. Briefing on Guidelines for the Determination of Geographical Names by JUPEM;
- v. Verification of National Geographical Names Database and Gazetteer Phase III by JUPEM;
- and
- vi. Verification of the ‘Jawi’ spelling and pronunciation.

## **4. PROBLEM, SOLUTION AND ACHIEVEMENT**

In developing and implementing the standardized usage of geographical names throughout the country, there were some issues encountered by MNCGN, amongst which are as follows:

### **4.1 Verification of The Geographical Names**

The Working Group has encountered a few issues in developing the Malaysian Geographical Names Database and Web Gazetteer mainly on the partial commitment from the SCGN in carrying out the verification of geographical names. On top of that, some of the State Liaison Officers appointed to the SCGN were often substituted by new officer and this affected the needed continuity on the said work. Since procedures to verify geographical names were not properly documented new officers would face difficulties in carrying out their tasks.

In order to resolve this issue, JUPEM now in the process of preparing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in Updating the Geographical Names Database for Urban and Developed Areas. Once this document completed, it will become the references to all the State Liaison Officer in the process of updating and verification of the geographical names.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Geographic names provide authoritative information relating to the location and spelling of geographical names which are gazetted in a consistent format for the official use of government, industry and the public. A consistent use of accurate place names is an important element in effective communication worldwide, apart from supporting socio-economic development, conservation and national infrastructure. Standard geographical names can also identify and reflect culture, heritage and landscape. There is an essential need to develop a comprehensive database containing names of official places that would benefit trade and commerce, population census and national statistics, property right and cadastre, urban and regional planning, environmental management, natural disaster relief, security strategy and peace-keeping operations, maps and atlas production, automatic navigation, tourism, and communication including postal and news services. MNCGN plays the role in representing Malaysia to meet such needs locally and in the global scale.