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

New York, 8-17 August 2017

Item 9 d) of the provisional agenda\*

**National standardization:**

**Administrative structure of national names authorities, legislation, policies and procedures**

**National Reports on Standardisation of Geographical Names**

Submitted by South Africa\*\*

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## NATIONAL REPORTS ON STANDARDISATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

The naming of geographical features in South Africa is part of the process of transformation of South African Heritage Landscape in order to forge a common national identity and nationhood. The ushering in of a new society through naming has always received attention at the highest level of governance since the advent of democracy and it is also part of symbolic reparation as recommended by Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Amongst the names that recently went through the process of standardization are the following town names: Renaming of **Elliot** to **Khowa**; **Queenstown** to **Komani**; **Mount Frere** to **KwaBhaca**; **Mount Ayliff** to **MaXesibeni**; **Alice** to **Dikeni** in the Eastern Cape Province. Other renaming of town names are **Clocolan** to **Hlohlolwane** and **Harrismith** to **iNtabazwe** in Free State Province.

In line with our duty to engage and consult our stakeholders, the government continues to deepen participation and involvement of all South Africans in the area of name change. This is possibly of the most complicated and contested spheres of our society since 1994. There is a mistaken notion that name changes are aimed at obliterating the culture and heritage of certain sections of the South African society. This is not so. This is about social transformation and realizing the ideals contained in the Freedom Charter that says that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. Amongst the geographical names of historical significance that were standardized are the name change of **Triumph** to **Sophiatown** in Gauteng Province, the place is seen as a symbol of social cohesion and proved to the apartheid government that people of divergent background can leave together in harmony as one community. The other place of historical and cultural significant that was standardized was name change **Schotchkloof** to **Bo-Kaap** which was then followed by Name Giving Ceremony as part of the cultural and religious practice of the community. As such, we will always be sensitive to wishes of communities, but equally, going forward, we will be decisive in providing the necessary support that communities need.

The department and the South African Geographical Names Council are engaged on awareness and capacity building for stakeholders in municipalities and provinces. Municipalities and provinces play a crucial role in initiating the process of standardization of geographical names and they are also central in consultation once the process has been initiated hence it is important that these spheres of government are properly empowered to process applications for standardization of geographical names.