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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ROMANIZATION SYSTEMS

Report of Working Group on Latinization Systems

(Central, East and Southeast European Division)

Participants of the 10th session of the UN Regional Group X /Prague, 1991/ concurrently claimed importance of transliteration of names which denote the geographical objects situated in the countries where non-Roman alphabets and script systems are used into the Roman characters. The session declared all UN recommended systems of transliteration from non-Roman script systems into the Roman characters had been applied to Czech and Slovak cartographic production to full extent.

As far as the cartographic products of Poland and Hungary are concerned, application of Latinization resolutions accepted by the UN conferences has not been so extensive there whereas it has had to face the older /original/ domestic systems of Latinization, so far not very successfully.

Generally say, the success of application of the accepted Latinization systems depends on following:

- extensiveness of Latinization systems application in the particular country which drew up the system of Latinization for cartographic production and other areas related to usage of geographical names;
- availability of sufficient range of maps containing the geographical names in a Latinized form in the concerned countries for their application abroad;
- availability of lists of geographical names compiled by particular countries /see Resolution Nr.II/35 accepted by the UN conference on standardization of geographical nomenclature/ for use of foreign cartographic producers.

Moreover, the Regional Group X declared that in the CSFR, Hungary and Poland particular systems of geographical names Latinization have been gradually introduced into the practice of non-cartographic areas /press, tourist guides, information leaflets etc/ even if with a certain time lag behind the cartographic production. Countries of the Regional Group X are aware of the danger that application of these Latinization systems would bring about an increase of the exonyms number in particular languages.

When transliterating the Arabic script into Latin alphabet, problems arose due to lack of written and particularly cartographic sources in the new UN system of Latin alphabet in the concerned area /see Resolution Nr.II/35/. This contradiction as well as differences in present approaches to transliteration into Roman characters being appeared in various atlases mainly of British and American provenances have disabled any precise application of accepted transliteration form so far. Situation has been largely aggravated by lack of uniformity of Latinization system applications even in particular Arabic speaking countries. No improvement can be expected until a fundamental turn of attitude is made by concerned countries. The UN Regional Group X recommends the session of the UN Group of Experts to inquire into this issue and to accept an appropriate solution.

As far as the Greek script transliteration is concerned, regulations accepted by UN are clear. The point is we do not know the present form of Greek geographical names after the Greek orthographical standard had been revised.