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on Romanization Systems

REPORT BY THE CO-CONVENOR

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The focus here is on developments regarding romanization systems as reported at the Fourteenth Session of UNGEGN, Geneva, 17-26 May 1989.

GREEK

It is important to determine the extent to which the ELOT 743 system has been applied to the Greek 1:50,000-scale HMGS map series or other official maps and publications. Furthermore, information needs to be obtained regarding the extent of the conversion from katharevousa name forms to dimotiki forms in other applications such as tourist publications, road signs, etc. Such conversion was to be accelerated, it had been reported, by a parliamentary act to be passed in 1989.

KOREAN

At the Fourteenth Session of UNGEGN, experts from both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea agreed to cooperate in arriving at a single unified romanization system for Korean inasmuch as both countries had each submitted quite disparate systems. According to the UNGEGN Newsletter No. 7, May 1991, both Koreas have held meetings on this matter under the auspices of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). It would be appropriate to have information as to the results of the meetings.

RUSSIAN

It is necessary to know more about work in progress for the new edition of the world atlas, the Atlas Mira, which would reflect names rendered in the GOST 1983 system in both the map plates and the index. It would also be helpful to know its anticipated publication date. Furthermore, it would be desirable to obtain evidence of cartographic source materials, issued during the past two years, which show implementation of the new system.

THAI

It has been reported that Thailand is in the process of revising its previously UN-approved romanization system. It is necessary to inquire whether the revised system, in both its transliteration and transcription versions as submitted to the Fifth Conference in 1987, has now been finalized.

Comments regarding the revised Thai system:

1. The introduction of the colon in the new romanized transliteration table, placed either after a Roman-script vowel letter (a:), or consonant letter (r:), or between two consonant letters (k:h), is potentially confusing because the colon could be taken as an indication of vowel length (quantity) or a syllable boundary. In addition, the introduction of diacritics (macron, sub-dot) will make the system difficult to use in an ADP environment.
2. The substitutions made of a few Roman-letter equivalents of Thai characters in the new romanized transcription table (almost entirely in the vowel inventory) only partially constitute an improvement. In addition, the problem of linguistic underdifferentiation remains, i.e., using the same Roman letter for two or more different Thai characters. An example of this underdifferentiation is the Roman letter t, used to represent a total of twenty different Thai characters in syllable-final position.