

RESEARCH ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AND THE UNGEGN

Submitted by Ass'ad S. Abdo (Saudi Arabia)

- 1- Serious research on geographical names especially on spelling, orthography, automation and other related aspects, can enhance the standardization of geographical names.
- 2- As an example, I refer to a study on place names written on the 1 : 500,000 scale maps of Saudi Arabia. This study investigates the differences in the ways of writing place names on those maps and some other major references of place names in Saudi Arabia. The study was published in April 1985 by the Department of Geography of Kuwait University and the Kuwaiti Geographical Society, publication No. 76.

The main emphasis was on spelling and orthography differences which were found to be of three kinds as shown in the table below :

Kinds of Differences	Freq.	o/o
Addition or omission of letters	570	48
Changes of letters	432	36
Other differences	186	16

All letters that were added, omitted or changed to other letters, together with other differences were investigated in detail. However, differences in diacritics were not included.

- 3- In view of what was said above, it is suggested that : the UNGEGN consider advising authorities of standardizing geographical names to (a) encourage serious research on geographical names by qualified scholars, (b) apply the findings of research in educating and training personnel involved in field collection of geographical names, their office treatment, writing and standardization, and (c) use such research to promote scholarly interest and and public awareness in the standardization of geographical names.