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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES  
Geneva, 4-22 September 1967  
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

REPORTS BY GOVERNMENTS ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Submitted by the Government of the Democratic  
Republic of the Congo

Review of the agenda

Items 1-6: No comments.

Items 7 and 8: Since the Democratic Republic of the Congo has as yet no national body dealing with the standardization of geographical names, it has no report or experience to offer on the subject. It will follow with interest the discussions on these two items in order to derive the maximum benefit from the experience gained by other countries.

Item 9: National standardization

(a) Field collection of names

There is a plan to establish field completion teams which will be responsible for this activity. Those teams will collaborate with the administrative authorities and local inhabitants and will base their collection of geographical names on the rules governing the spelling of Congolese geographical names, which are reproduced in annex 1.

(b) Office treatment of names

At present this is done at the Geographical Institute of the Congo according to the above-mentioned rules (see annex 1).

(c) Decisions relating to multilingual areas

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has chosen French as the principal language. In addition to this principal language there are four main languages of communication: Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kiswaheli.

Geographical names are collected from the local inhabitants in one of these four languages of communication and their spelling is determined according to the above-mentioned rules (see annex 1).

(d) National gazetteer

A National gazetteer has been started. A list of place names has been prepared for each region on the basis of the 1:200,000-scale regional maps, the only series of maps covering the whole country. The location of these places in the regions is indicated in terms of the quarter-degree square in which each of them is situated. Work on this gazetteer has come to a halt for lack of staff and of information from regional authorities. It could be resumed when the field completion teams are formed.

(e) Administrative structure of national names authorities

No comments, since there are no bodies of this kind in the Congo. Developments in this matter will be kept in view for information and possible future action.

(f) Automatic data processing

Developments will be kept in view and discussed with reference to possible use in the future.

Items 10 and 11: Geographical terms and writing systems

Developments will be kept in view for information and discussed with reference to possible action in the future.

Item 12: International co-operation

The Congolese delegation will have occasion to give its views and explain its position when the various topics in item 12 come under discussion.

Item 13: Report of the Conference

No comments.

GEOGRAPHICAL INSTITUTE OF THE CONGO

Drawing and Printing Section

SPELLING OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The former Belgian Commission on African Linguistics, which was responsible for drawing up rules for the spelling of Congolese geographical names, laid down the following provisions for exclusive application (Circular no. 21/30 of 12 August 1953).

"The actual sound of each name as it is pronounced by the local inhabitants shall be used as the basis for its spelling.

"Since it is not possible to obtain a perfect phonetic representation of every sound by means of the letters of our alphabet and orthographic signs, every effort shall be made to convey as accurately as possible with the following characters:

- "1. The vowels a, e, i and o and the consonants b, d, f, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, t, v and z shall be pronounced as in French.
- "2. The difference between long and short vowels shall not be shown.
- "3. c and q shall not be used to denote the sound k.
- "4. The difference between the closed e (as in été, nez) and the open e (as in très, mes, net, même) shall not be shown.
- "5. g shall always be hard, as in gare, irrespective of the vowel immediately following it. Examples: Isangila, Bakenge, Zange, Kenge, which shall be pronounced as if spelt Issanguila, Bakangai, Zangai, Kenghé.
- "6. The letter h shall be written only in the group sh and in names which contain a true aspirate (Yahuma, Kahemba, Kalehe).
- "7. The semi-vowel i shall be represented by y as in yard. Examples: Yambuya, Yalundi, Yakoya. The sounds ya, ye, etc., shall never be represented by ja, je, etc.: hence Bayanda, Bayeye and not Bajanda, Bajeje, Bapeja. The letter y shall never be used at the end of a word to represent the vowel i: Noki, Dri and not Noky, Dry.
- "8. j shall be used only to represent the sound it conveys in the word jour.  
Example: Bunji.
- "9. The difference between the closed o (as in chose, aube, beau) and the open o (as in tort, robe) shall not be shown.

- "10. s shall always be sibilant like s, c and ç in servir, acier and garçon respectively. Hence Isangi, Kasongo, Yakusu, pronounced as if written Issangui, Kassongo, Yakussu.
- "11. u shall always represent the French sound ou. Examples: Rubi, Ubangi, Uele.
- "12. The semi-vowel w shall be pronounced as in the English word William. Care shall be taken not to confuse wa, we, wi, etc., with ua, ue, ui. With the spelling wa, we, wi the whole stress falls on the vowels a, e, i, whereas the spelling ua, ue, ui shall be used to represent, in each of the diphthongs, two distinct sounds articulated with equal stress (ua being pronounced ou-a, ue pronounced ou-é and ui pronounced ou-i). Examples: Kalungwa, Nyangue, Kwilu, Muala, Duela, Duizi.
- "13. x shall never be used.
- "14. The sound represented in French by ch shall be written sh. Examples: Shonzo, Tshuapa, pronounced as if written Chonzo, Tchuapa.
- "15. Double consonants shall be represented by the letters corresponding to their component sounds. Examples: Tshubiri, Budja.
- "16. Two vowels written together shall be pronounced separately. Thus ai shall be pronounced a-i as in maïs, ao pronounced a-o as in cacao; au pronounced a-u (u representing the sound ou) as in raout, ei pronounced e-i as in pléistocène, réitéré.
- "17. ph shall never be used to represent the sound f.
- "18. All letters shall be pronounced.
- "19. Vowels shall be doubled only when there are two distinct sounds to be represented. Examples: Zuulu, pronounced Zou-ou-lou; Oosima, pronounced O-o-sima.
- "20. Consonants shall not be doubled; hence tt, ss, bb shall not be used. Examples: Mangbetu, Bangaso, Kasai, Kobo.
- "21. Congolese words often begin with the letter m or n followed by another consonant; in such cases the m or n is an integral part of the word and shall therefore be written without an apostrophe. Examples: Mbao, Mpozo, Ndekesha, Ngozi, Nko, Nsontin.
- "22. The use of accents and the diaeresis shall be abolished.
- "23. By way of exception, the word "Congo" shall continue to be written with a C.
- "24. The letter s shall never be added to the name of a tribe to form the plural. Hence: The Mombutu, the Bangala, the Ngombe."