

**Twenty-third Session
Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006**

**Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda:
Reports of the Division**

Report of the China Division

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Report of the China Division

China division has promoted the standardization of geographical names actively since the twenty-second session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on April 2004.

1. Public Services Project of Geographical Names

China is carrying out the Public Services Project of Geographical Names (PSPGN) in order to strengthen normative management, improve the public-service capability, and raise the level of geographical names services. China is now in the accelerating period of industrialization and urbanization. Urban construction changes with each passing day. New geographical names come forth continually. The number is large and the rate is high. According to rough statistics, over twenty thousand new geographical names appear each year recently. At the same time, the society need better geographical names public-service for more and more social exchanges and traveling. To meet the requirements of social exchange and economic development, the Ministry of Civil Affairs started the PSPGN in 2005 after been authorized by the State Council. The main tasks of the project include: management standardization, geographical names signs setting and perfection, urban geographical names planning, database establishment and maintenance and geographical names information service. The aim is to advance administration and improve the capability of public services. The project is favored by the society. Governments at all levels responded rapidly, made plans and disposed carefully. They try to improve the external environment for society communication and enhance the capability of public service. The project had a good start and was boosted smoothly last year. The effect emerges step by step.

2. Database

The geographical names database establishment has achieved staged success. Database is the foundation of PSPGN. China undertook the work in April 2004. The aim is to form 4 levels' data base of county, city, province and the whole country. But the work progressed slowly. Database is one of the emphases of PSPGN. All data should be integrated, standard and updated. The software should be applicable. Databases have been established in 10 provinces, 121 cities and 913 counties. Geographical names information was offered to the society through websites, telephone hotlines and touch-screens based on the database. There are 48 websites, 127 telephone hotlines and 165 touch-screens offering geographical names information now in our country. In addition 375 cities had their own digital maps. An activity named Building Advanced Cities on Geographical Names Information Service has been launched. Ten advanced cities are: Shijiazhuang Shi(city) of Hebei Sheng(province), Chaoyang Shi of Liaoning Sheng, Harbin Shi of Heilongjiang Sheng, Nanjing Shi of Jiangsu Sheng, Hangzhou Shi and Huzhou Shi of Zhejiang Sheng, Jinan Shi of Shandong Sheng, Changsha Shi of Hunan Sheng, Guangzhou Shi of Guangdong sheng and Chongqing municipality. The aim of the activity is to explore ways of geographical names informationalization and getting experiences.

3. Geographical names sign

The work of setting standard geographical names signs in cities has been completed. Setting geographical names signs in rural areas has begun. The work of setting standard geographical names signs in cities started in 2000. About 53 million standard geographical names signs (including road signs, lane signs, building signs and doorplates) had been set in 661 cities until 2005. These signs, simple or novelty, add beautiful scenery to cities and bring convenience to the people. The public service function of city is improved. Most provinces have begun to set geographical names signs in county seats, towns and villages. Significant progress has been made in county seats. Over 50 percent county seats of the whole country have finished the work. All county seats of Tianjin Shi, Jiangsu Sheng, Zhejiang Sheng, Shanxi Sheng, Henan Sheng and Qinghai Sheng have finished the work.

4. Geographical names planning

To improve the level of geographical names standardization, we developed the work of geographical names planning. A circular issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Construction give the instructions in detail. The guiding ideas of geographical names planning are the scientific theories of toponymy and urban planning. The basic principles include: (a)the name matches the reality, (b)standardization, (c)suit both refined and popular tastes, (d)easy to remember. The geographical names planning should be in parallel with the urban construction planning. To improve the transparence and involve more persons in, public hearings are necessary. A course on geographical names planning was held in Jiyuan Shi of Henan Sheng in 2005. The main subjects include planning scope, method and work flow. according to rough statistic, 120 cities of all 287 cities at prefecture level or above have begun the geographical names planning, and 25 percent have finished the work by the end of 2005.

5. Standardization of geographical names and books

The standardization of Chinese characters and pronunciation of the names of administrative regions above town and village has been finished. A few natural geographical names have been examined and researched. Some nonstandard spelling and translation on geographical names signs have been corrected. Some nonstandard geographical names, such as Sharen Ba(killing slop) and Yanchang Xian(prolong), have been changed in cities as Chongqing Shi and Kunming Shi. The impact is well.

Ancient and modern Chinese Geographical Names Gazetteer has been published. The ancient geographical names include the geographical names for administrative regions, man-made features and natural features used before 1912. Old names include the names for administrative regions abolished between 1912 and 1949. Modern names include all kinds of geographical names used as of June 2004. Over 10 million Chinese characters and 60 thousand geographical names are contained in the gazetteer.

Administrative Division Atlas of China has been published. The data of geographical

names, administrative regions and survey are up to date. So the atlas concentrated the harvest of the management of administrative divisions and geographical names in recent half century.

Some cities published books to introduce local geographical names culture. One example is *The Old Streets and Lane of Jinan*, which published by Jinan Shi of Shandong Sheng. The origin, history and meanings of old local names of streets and lanes were introduced in the book. Another example is *Impression of the Old Capital*, published by Nanjing Shi of Jiangsu Sheng. The book outlines the history of Nanjing, the ancient capital of six dynasties, by introducing some old geographical names.