

**Twenty-ninth session
Bangkok, 24-29 April 2016**

Item 12 of the provisional agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names

Exonyms and endonyms in country names used in Brazil

Submitted by Brazil *

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Resolutions II/28, III/17, III/19, IV/20, V/13, VI/10

PAPER SUBMITTED BY BRAZIL

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Summary

The paper presents a brief description of the methodology used by the Reference Center on Geographic Names (CRNG) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the elaboration of a new version of the list of Brazilian country names, as a first step of the preparation of the list of Brazilian exonyms, and the progress made so far.

The methodology takes into consideration recommendations from the resolutions of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names regarding exonyms and describes criteria used for decision making on the adequate form of each country name to be adopted.

Exonyms and endonyms in country names used in Brazil

The aim of this paper is to briefly present the methodology used by the Reference Center on Geographic Names (CRNG) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the preparation of a new version of the Brazilian list of country names, as a first step of the preparation of the list of Brazilian exonyms, and the status of the work so far.

Taking into consideration the recommendation in resolutions 28 of the Second United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names, 20 of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and 13 of the Fifth United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names that the national lists of exonyms should be reviewed for the reduction of the exonyms in current use, and that this measure is intended for the facilitation of international communication, the Reference Center on Geographic Names (CRNG) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) is currently preparing the list of Brazilian exonyms simultaneously to the list of country names (VI/10) not only aiming at the reduction of exonymic forms, but also at the standardization of only one form for the name of each country. This is the case of *Dijibuti/Djibouti/Jibuti* and *Barein/Bareine/Bahreïn/Barém*, among others. Because both the list of country names and the list of exonyms are concerns not only of the IBGE but also of other institutions, mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the list will be discussed among the above mentioned institutions and others in the Comitê de Nomes Geográficos da Comissão Nacional de Cartografia - CNGEO/CONCAR (Committee on Geographic Names of the National Commission on Cartography - CNGEO/CONCAR).

Although there is no agreement as to the need of the reduction of exonyms, as indicated by the discussions of the 17th Meeting of the Working Group of Exonyms in Zagreb, in 2015, the Brazilian list of exonyms is being carefully elaborated according to the criteria recommended by the UNGEGN and expressed in its resolutions and Working Papers, giving special regard, however, to the names which are traditional and part of the Brazilian cultural heritage and cultural identity such as *Inglaterra* (England), *Áustria* (Österreich), *Alemanha* (Deutschland), etc. Thus, the adoption of endonyms will be proposed for names of newly created countries (III/17) or countries which have a more distant or recent relationship with Brazil.

However, phonetic and semantic criteria are also kept in view. So, endonyms which may present pronunciation difficulties for the speakers of Brazilian Portuguese and those which resemble derogatory words in this language, graphically or phonetically, are not to be adopted. In order to check the acceptability of some forms, further research will be carried out.

In the case of countries and other features whose names give rise to international problems, the adoption of exonyms is a strategy to achieve neutrality.

Also, there are cases of countries which officially request, for various reasons, that all references to them are made by the endonym, which is the case of *Côte d'Ivoire*, or by a particular endonym, as is the case of *Belarus*.

In summary, the criteria used in the evaluation of the form to be adopted for each country name are, in this order: requests of countries, political issues, traditional use, semantic aspects, phonetic aspects and the use of Brazilian Portuguese spelling.

In order to start the elaboration of the list, a database was created so that information collected in the background research could be organized. It contains the forms of the country names as used by the Minister of Foreign Affairs - short and long forms; information on whether this form is an exonym or not; other forms used in Brazilian Portuguese by other institutions, media, forms recommended by grammarians and scholars; endonyms (romanized, when it is the case) in all the official languages of the country - short and long forms, as presented in the last version of the UNGEGN List of Country Names; form proposed for the country name on the new list; and general observations. These observations included mainly cases in which a country request the use of the endonyms in all references to them, whether there is internal ethnic and political conflicts in the country and other particularities which could indicate the most adequate form of a country name to use.

Because the list is destined for general use by the society, the database also contains names of countries which are not recognized by Brazil and the UN.

As a second step, the endonyms and the cases of exonyms which should not be included in a list of exonyms, according to resolution III/19, were identified. This is the case of those differing from the official name only by the omission, addition or alteration of diacritics - when this does not constitute a new name in the endonym language - or the article; those differing from the official name by declension or derivation; those created by the translation of a generic term.

Also, exonyms which were considered traditional according to a criteria involving name length and consistency of use were identified.

The exonyms not included in the groups above were grouped into categories, which allows decision making concerning the use of their exonymic or endonymic forms to be coherent in cases belonging to a similar or equal context. However, each case is to be dealt with individually.

One of the categories used are exonyms which differ from the endonym by the use of one letter which sound the same as the one in the endonym language. Ex. *Zimbábue/Zimbabwe*, *Ruanda/Rwanda*, *Botsuana/Botswana*, *Malauí/Malawi*. These exonyms may have had their origins at a time when the letters "W", "Y" and "K" were excluded from the Brazilian Portuguese alphabet. Nowadays, as these letters have been reincorporated, we may find out that the endonyms may be adopted in such cases.

One more category, among others, involves the use of the diacritic "~" or the letter "n" or "m" to produce nasalization. Ex. *Omã/Oman*, *Irã/Iran*, *Vietnã/Vietnam*.

At the moment, names are starting to be analyzed individually within the categories and later exonyms will be marked for possible deletions from the current list and the provisional new list will be presented to the Committee on Geographic Names - CNGEO.

As mentioned above, the work will proceed to the preparation of the list of exonyms of other categories of features.