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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

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Although 2,000 years have passed since Horace wrote his epistle to Julius Florus, the concepts in it may still be applied to geographical names. Moreover, all the countries of Latin America, in particular, feel a great need to study, express their opinions on, determine and record their geographical names in the most uniform manner possible along certain basic lines as experience and local usage dictate.

Since earliest antiquity, man has always tried to provide distinct geographical names for all his surroundings, since this has always been the only way of accurately determining where the different features are situated.

In addition, it should not be forgotten that standardization at the national level is the basis for international standardization, because only this makes it possible to avoid the anarchy prevailing in this field and at the same time to exercise the necessary control over geographical names.

The writer has always held the view that countries which are not yet privileged to have their own national geographical names authority should proceed to establish one, as an official specialized body, as soon as possible, with a view to benefiting from its advisory services in determining, redetermining or possibly changing geographical names, applying the procedures established for the purpose. Thus, when the national authority decides on a particular name, it will be the only official name and must therefore be disseminated as widely as possible within the national territory.

The two regional meetings on the standardization of geographical names, held in Central America at this writer's request (Guatemala, 7-11 October 1968, and Panama, 19-23 October 1970), dealt thoroughly with national standardization.