United Nations
Third session of the ad hoc group of experts
on geographical names
2 to 12 February 1971

Information paper No. 25

Report of the Working Group on a single Romanization System
1. The tasks assigned to the Working Group by the Census Conference of 1957 and by the A/101 Group of Experts, New York Session 1970 were:
   a) to undertake comparative studies of existing romanization systems for each non-Roman writing system of cartographic importance;
   b) to seek ways to accomplish the adoption of a single romanization system for each non-Roman alphabet or script for international application.

2. The Working Group held its first meeting on 19 February 1970 in New York, where Mr. César de Silva was elected unanimously as Chairman. At the second meeting on 20 February 1970, the Working Group decided to carry out its work by means of correspondence. Subsequently the Chairman issued four circulars, and the other members fourteen. At the beginning of the Third Session of the A/101 Group of Experts, 3 February 1971, three written statements were distributed by members of the Working Group, and in the absence of the Chairman, Mr. César de Silva, Mr. Brou accepted appointment as Chairman pro tempore of the Working Group.

   a) Attending were Mr. Brou, Chairman pro tempore, and the following members: Messrs. Casalini, Kowda, Komor, Middle, Page, and Shuma. Present as observers were the following experts: Mr. Adami of Bruxelles, and Mr. Wang of the Republic of China.
   b) The meeting was begun with a general review of the activities of the members during the past year. It was stated that material on the writing system of the following languages has been distributed to all members of the Working Group: Ambard, Assam, Azerbaijani, Bengali, Greek, Gujerati, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Urdu, Punjabi, Far Eastern, Russian, Sinhalese, Tamil, Telugu, Thai and Urdu.
   c) It was recognized that the present title of Recommendation 9 of the Census Conference (and of the Working Group as well) has led to misinterpretation. Therefore the Working Group suggests replacement by the title: "A Single Romanization System for each non-Roman Writing System for International Application."
   d) The need for definition of certain terms for use within the Working Group was recognized and the following were agreed upon as they appear in Working Paper 25, presented by Mr. Page.
Society

A set of graphic symbols which may be variously employed in representation of
the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language or languages. (The
items of an alphabetic script typically represent phonemes; those of a syllabic
script: syllables; and those of an ideographic script: morphemes).

Alphabet

A specific set of graphic symbols which may be employed in representation of
the phonological elements of a particular language.

Transliteration

The process of recording the phonological and/or morphological elements of a
language in terms of a specific writing system.

Transliteration:

The process of recording the graphic symbols of one writing system in terms of
corresponding graphic symbols of a second writing system.

Romanization

The process of recording in Roman script either the phonological elements of a
language or the graphic symbols of a non-Roman writing system.

3) The following general principles for romanization of romanization
systems were agreed upon:

1. Systemic reversibility should be sought insofar as practical.
2. Consistent employment of graphic symbols within any given romanization
   system should be sought.

3) The meeting agreed to deal with romanization systems for all state
languages of sovereign states, comparative studies to be prepared as follows:

1. Greek – Mr. Clóvis de Sá hva
2. Arabic – Mr. Brus. In reference to paragraph 52 of the Report of
   the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, 30 April 1970, Mr. Brus is requested
   to study the implications of the Ethiopian reply to inquiry by the
   Cartography Section of the United Nations.
3. Hebrew – Mr. Clóvis de Sá hva
4. Arabic – Mr. Brus. The meeting further recommended that the expert for
   the Arabic Group contact authorities in the various Arabic speaking
   countries with a view to implementing Resolution 12 of the Geneva
   Conference
5. Persian – Mr. Clóvis de Sá hva. The meeting further recommended that
   the expert for Iran ascertain whether alterations to the romanized
   system for transliteration of Persian names cited in "Translation
   of Persian Geographic Names to Latin Alphabet" September 1966, had
been or were to be implemented in autographic or other graphic publications. In such a case Resolution 13 will have to be amended.

6. Czechoslovakia - Mr. Cejlan. Particular consideration will be given to UN/ESOS/1/R/UNOf.57/66/61, 22 October 1970.

7. Somaliland - Mr. Gãnez de Silva

8. Serbenco - Mr. Gãnez de Silva is asked to prepare a draft resolution for the Second Conference. Special consideration should be given to the fact that Serbo-Croatian appears in both a cyrillic and a roman script system.

9. Macedonian - Mr. Misdalec

10. Bulgarian - Mr. Cejlan

11. Mongol - Mr. Misdalec

12. Balkanian - Mr. Cejlan

13. Burmese - Mr. Cejlan

14. Thai - Mr. Pego. The meeting further suggested that Mr. Pego enumerate alternatives to the recommended system for transliteration of Thai names as cited in "Romanization Guide for Thai Script." April 1968.

15. El Salvador - Mr. Pego's comparative study revealed some inconsistencies in the joint Cambodian and ECE/ESOS 1962 System referred to in paragraph 51 of Report of the Second Session of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, 29 April 1970. These will be drawn to the attention of the authorities of the El Salvador Republic in the hope that a finalized system may be presented to the Second Conference for adoption.

16. Indian - Mr. Pego

17. Chinese - In the last sentence of paragraph 50, Report of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, 29 April 1970, the East Central and South European Group will submit to the fourth meeting of the Group of Experts a report on the romanization of Chinese script. The United Kingdom Group will also prepare a statement.

18. Korean - Mr. Pego

19. Japanese - Mr. Pego

20. In regard to the language of the Indian Group, it was recommended that the transliteration table distributed by Mr. Sharma be circulated for consideration, and comments should be directed to Col. Sharma in time for discussion at the Second Full Conference, in relation to paragraph D. Recommendation D. Resolution 14 of the Geneva Conference.
21. Concerning the languages of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Mr. Komarov said he would be presenting a statement on the romanization of Russian at the Second Conference in 1972. Subsequently he would give consideration to romanization systems for the State languages of the constituent Republic other than the R.S.F.S.R. (Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Moldavian, Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kirghiz, Kazakh, Azerbaijani, Armenian and Georgian). In this connection, it was proposed that the following modifications should be made to recommendation D of Resolution 6 of the First Conference: Paragraph (a) should be redesignated (A); and a new paragraph (c) should be inserted with the following wording: "Give a recommendation as to which linguistic form or forms should be used for international standardization".

The writing systems of the following languages are involved: Hindi, Nepali, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Bengali, Assamese, Urdu, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, Kashmiri, Singhalese and Bhutanese.