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Rules and Procedures for Standardization

Proclaimed by Guatemala and adopted by the
Second Regional Meeting on the Standardization
of Geographical Names held in Panama, 19 to 23 October 1970

(Francis Cell)

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On the occasion of the Second Regional Meeting on the Standardization of Geographical Names, convened by Executive Resolution dated 2 June 1970 of the Government of Panama and held in said city October 19 to 23, 1970, during its Fourth Working Session of October 23, 1970, the Delegate of Guatemala proposed that the Meeting should adopt Resolution 4 of the First Regional Meeting held in 1968 in Guatemala with the change of Latin America instead of Central America; that the pertaining Rules and Procedures should be copied from Working Document DP-10, "National Names Authorities, Functions and Modus Operandi" presented by Dr. Francis Coll, as well as the twenty Recommendations of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held at Geneva in September 1967. The Plenary resolved, after having made reference to the documents, that Resolutions should be adopted as requested, in view of their importance.

During the Second Plenary Meeting of October 23, 1970, and upon a statement of Dr. Javier Pulgar Vidal, Delegate of Peru, in the sense that the Rapporteur had not read all the resolutions which had been adopted, it was decided to have them added. Thus, according to the official record of the Second Meeting, in all there were 23 resolutions adopted at the Working Sessions and Plenaries.

According to the wishes of the colleagues, expressed during the Third Session of our Group of Experts, Resolution No. 21, "Rules and Procedures for Standardization" of the Panama Regional Meeting is presented in an informal translation made by the Regional Latin American Expert. It is hoped that the document may be of use and further information which may be requested, will be given gladly.

RESOLUTION #21

Rules and Procedures for Standardization

The Second Regional Meeting on the Standardization of Geographical Names

Whereas:

Splendid working documents have been presented for consideration by the delegates to this Regional Meeting:

RESOLVES:

That the countries of Latin America, in declaring the standardizing procedures of each of their National Authorities of Geographical Names, should take the following into consideration, which were proclaimed by Guatemala, adapting them to their national requirements:

I. GENERAL DEFINITIONS

- a) Geographical Name is the proper name formed by one or more words which elucidate and delimit an area as an individual entity or geographical characteristic.
- b) A geographical entity or geographical characteristic, is any perfectly defined geographical accident, object or place.
- c) Toponym is the name of any geographical entity or characteristic.
- d) Topographic accident is any geographical relief accident, known also as an oronym.
- e) Hydrographic accidents are all geographical accidents constituted by bodies of water.
- f) Cultural characteristics are all those geographical accidents made, or substantially modified by man.
- g) Generic term is the one which forms part of an geographical name, to indicate the type of entity designed, which has the same meaning in current local use.
- h) Specific term of a given geographic name, is the part which singularizes it.
- i) Map information are the words appearing on a map and which do not nominate a geographical characteristic, but only show it.
- j) Transliteration is the letter by letter transference of a word from one alphabet to another.
- k) Transcription is the transfer of a word from one language to another on the basis of its sounds.

- 1) Uniformity of geographical names, or standardization of geographical names, is the process by means of which the authorized bureau determines the names, even if its use is not compulsory.

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Toponymy, or the science of names, requires for its study personnel trained in Geography, Linguistics and History.
2. A chart or a map is a scientific register; a document for research and an art object.
3. A geographical name is also a historical testimony which has to give life and personality to a chart or a map. It must be an aid for its correct identification and comprehension and, generally, is subject to changes or evolutions which must be controlled.
4. Establishing a geographical name requires--therefore without losing sight of the problems of standardization, of conscientious studies based on research, analysis, interpretations and so forth, until reaching the correct selection, without neglecting anything related to its simplicity and easy acceptance by the user.
5. The incorporation of a doubtful name to an official document of great value as constituted by a map, chart, geographic dictionary or glossary of geographic terms, should never be decided upon.
6. Any dubious geographical name should be studied regarding its linguistic, semantic, etymologic, orthographic, geographical, historical, traditional and other aspects, in accordance to the region and language to which it pertains.
7. Any unnecessary and thoughtless change of a geographical name, equals destruction of life monuments of History and Language, as the toponyms are consecrated by usage and their destruction represents erasure of vestiges of History, with which the national character is sacrificed to satisfy in most instances temporary vanities.
8. Toponyms have a trend to be idiosyncratical in their syntactic pattern. Therefore, the changes of sound or the language of which they form a part, leads towards an aberrant reflex with regard to their etymological meaning.
9. By means of the toponym the most suggesting characteristic of the region it designates is found, as it is a known fact that those who imposed the names which have been maintained sought always the most colourful note and,

In representing the same, chosen the rich and euphonic term for baptizing the places through which they wandered, or where they lived. It must be borne always in mind, that analysis of the writing of toponyms, with which all geographical accents are nominated, tell us its genealogy, its variations and life, as the words--like anything alive--are also subject to evolution and same is necessary to be controlled in the geographical names.

10. Unless sufficient very important reasons against, a geographical name which has been established and declared to be the standardized one, should not be altered or changed for another one.
11. It is not convenient to introduce in the geographical denomination of any country proper names which honour any person, after a period of no less than fifteen(15) years after its death.
12. The ideal is that all names should be concise, euphonic and, if possible, denominative of the place to which they are applied.
13. In those cases in which the names of the rural properties could cause confusion due to duplication within the same political administrative division (county, municipal or similar circumscription); disservice of the original large plantation or farm or that no new specific name has been given yet to the same one, in accordance with its owners and the national authority on geographical names, the authorities entrusted with the national cadaster will establish said proper names.
14. Under any viewpoints, geographical names are unacceptable which contain:
 - a) Unnatural or discordant combinations proceeding from voices of different languages, unless these have been consecrated by its usage.
 - b) Corrupt or modified terms.
 - c) Connotation of obscenity or blasphemy.
 - d) Those toponyms which in certain cases could be interpreted as publicity of any commercial or industrial enterprise.
15. Whenever possible, the optative parts of a toponym should be avoided.
16. No state, autonomous, semi-autonomous or private enterprise can use any geographical name or category of any populated place, unless it is declared as the official or standardized one. In case of doubt, any inquiry should be made to the National Authority of Geographical Names who will dictate on this matter.

17. The National Authority of Geographical Names will accept for study only those names about whom sufficient information in writing is given, in an original and two copies and on the forms prepared for this purpose. What is to be decided upon will be entered on the form, of which the Names Authority will keep the original and duplicate, and the triplicate will be given to the interested party.

III. THE NATIONAL AUTHORITY OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

- 1 (a) The President of the Republic, through the Ministry of the Interior, is empowered to nominate, renominate or change the names of geographical entities, characteristics or accidents.
- (b) In accordance with the existing legal regulations, before any resolution on this matter is issued, a hearing is ordered from the National Geographic Institute and the Directorate General of Statistics.
- 2 (a) Due to the nature of the studies and work it carries out, by Presidential Resolution the National Geographic Institute is the agency entrusted with the study, verdict and registry of the geographical names within the country. No name is considered as the official one, unless it appears registered at the National Authority of Geographical Names.
- (b) All matters related to geographical names have been entrusted by the National Geographic Institute to its National Authority of Geographical Names, formed by its two bodies: The Working Group and the Consultive Group.

The first one is formed by three officials of the National Geographic Institute. The Chief of the Department of Human Geography, the Chief of the Editing Department and the Chief of the Geographic Division.

Its tasks in this field are:

- a) Inquiry, compilation, analysis, comparison, interpretation and evaluation of each geographical name.
- b) Submit to the National Names Authority all projects of resolutions, methods and procedures in the field of standardization.
- c) Registry, transcription and divulgation of all adopted resolutions, as well as taking care of the communications or exchange with alien agencies entrusted with the standardization of geographical names.

The second one and one which constitutes in itself the National Names Authority, is presided by the Director General of the National Geographic Institute; as Member and Executive Secretary the Chief of the Department of Human Geography and as Members, representatives of the following agencies:

- a) National Geographic Institute
- b) Faculty of Humanities, University San Carlos de Guatemala.
- c) Directorate General of Statistics
- d) National Indigenistical Institute (Instituto Indigenista Nacional)
- e) Guatemalan Academy corresponding to the Spanish Language
- f) Society of Geography and History of Guatemala
- g) National Section of Guatemala, Pan American Institute of Geography and History

The fundamental attributions of the National Authority of Geographical Names are:

1. Establishment of general guidelines, clearly outlined and fully divulged in order to help for an easy acceptance of standardized names.
2. Issuance of all the required studies on the geographical names of the country.
3. Approval of the methods and procedure of standardization of the geographical names.
4. Advising on matters within its scope.

IV. STANDARDIZING MEASURES

The National Authority of Geographical Names will propose to the National Geographic Institute:

1. The method to be used for determining the present name and its correct writing. This method may have the variants required in the different linguistic zones and should take into consideration:
 - a) A complete as possible investigation to furnish information with regard to:
 - (i) Spelling of the name in old maps.
 - (ii) Spelling of the name in modern maps.
 - (iii) Spelling of the name in governmental, cadastral, registry documents and so forth.

- (iv) Spelling of the name in archives and historical literature.
 - (v) Written form; phonetic, phonetic and so forth of the name, as well as its etymology.
 - b) The extension and character of the nominated feature, should be determined as exactly as possible.
 - c) In the initial phase and whenever possible, sufficiently trained personnel should be used, in order not only to be able to face, but also to recognize the linguistic phenomena.
 - d) For determination of the orthography, it should abide with:
 - (i) The rules set forth by the Royal Spanish Academy if the names are in Spanish.
 - (ii) The rules set forth by the Guatemalan Academy corresponding to the Spanish Language if the names are proper of the country (guatemaltequismos).
 - (iii) The rules set forth by the National Indigenistal Institute (Instituto Indigenista Nacional) if the names are autochthonous.
2. General guidelines, clearly outlined and fully divulged should be established, in order to facilitate acceptance of the standardized names. Within these principles, these should be contemplated:
- a) Efficiency with which the names identify and facilitate reference to individual geographic entities.
 - b) Those which establish on a basis the decisions between retention and change of a name.
 - c) Methods for editing and actualizing said measures.
 - d) Not to lose sight of habits and attitudes observed or deduced from the people towards the geographic names.
 - e) The systematic treatment should be towards retention, against the change. The exceptions must be fully justified.
 - f) Whenever possible, significative elements of studied names should not be omitted.
 - g) No translations are to be made, unless they are accepted by usage.
 - h) Whenever possible, duplication is to be avoided. For this:
 - (i) Proposal of the geographical name of the least weight should be made.
 - (ii) If this change is not convenient nor accepted, a significant element should be introduced. In any case, it is convenient to establish the degree of duplications.

- i) No resolution should be made regarding the change of a geographical name, nor make a selection among several of the same wright, without hearing the users previously and have determined their probable reaction.
 - j) For writing aboriginal names, the symbols studied and approved by the National Aboriginal Institute will be used.
 - k) The names of the physical features have to be clear and concise. In other words, it has to be established as to what the name designates and its extension.
 - l) All physical characteristics in general, which have only a name or a partial name, should be nominated.
 - m) Whenever possible, the standardization of names with optional parts should be avoided. However, when this is inevitable, the cases or parts in which the optional will be used, should be clearly indicated.
 - n) Whenever it is considered indispensable in order to avoid confusion, the generic elements should not be suppressed.
 - o) Whenever local exoreasons of Guatemala (guatemaltequismos) are used, its correct meaning should be given.
 - p) A selection must be made between parallel forms or grammatical variants.
 - q) It should be clearly indicated when in a name the article or the preposition should be included or not.
 - r) The usage of sigla and/or abbreviations should also be regulated.
 - s) For the descriptions of localizations it should be proceeded as precise as possible, either using geographic co-ordinates or distances to a fixed point.
 - t) In those cases in which it is necessary, the gender, number and so forth, should be indicated.
3. It is understood that aforementioned standardization procedures should not be considered to be exhaustive. The National Authority of Geographical Names will propose to the National Geographic Institute all those additional standardizing principles which experience and use may advise.
4. Recommends to the Governments of Latin America, that they should give a larger support to their respective National Authorities of Geographical Names, in order that same can carry out fully their tasks which redound in benefit of their own countries.