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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

National Standardization of  
Geographical Names in Japan

Paper presented by Japan

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### 1. Collection of Geographical Names

As Japan has no centralized agency for geographical name collection, two agencies concerned with the mapping, namely, the geographical Survey Institute, Ministry of Construction and the Hydrographic Department, Maritime Safety Agency have been engaged in the collection of geographical names for a long time.

In adoption of the geographical names on maps, both agencies have the same principle as adopting the names applied by the local people and collecting the name lists submitted by local public bodies.

### 2. Necessity of Standardization

It is general to consider that no inconsistency happens in the above process of name collections, but there are much inconsistency of name collections between the two agencies, caused of being several names on one feature applied by the local people. confusion of the political simplification and restriction of official Japanese characters and syllables(Kana), or historical changes of the language used by local people from the dialect to the standard language. These kinds of inconsistency have influenced the geographical names on the maps and charts, and the geographical education and mass media. Japan's necessity of the standardization depends not only on the international needs but also on the reason mentioned above.

In order to cope with the matter, the standardization of geographical names have been carried out earnestly by the Joint Committee composed of the geographical Survey Institute and the Hydrographic Department. In the Joint Committee the Primary and secondary Education Bureau ministry of Education the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), the Japan Map Center, the Japan Hydrographic Association have also take part as observers.

### 3. General principle for standardizing

In standardizing the geographical names in the Joint Committee, the following general principles are applied.

(1) When a geographical name is the same in both name collections at its spelling and pronunciation, it becomes naturally the standard name. In the case when any difference is found in them, the newer name at its date is adopted as a standard name. When the dates of both collections are the same or close, the name decision is made after consulting with related local public bodies. In the case when a name is listed only in any one collection, it is naturally decided as a standard name.

(2) When some geographical name is related with the national laws, the decision is made after considering the object of the laws.

(3) As for the international seas and oceans beyond territorial seas, the adoption of the name is made according to the principles admitted by the International Hydrographic Bureau.

(4) In some case when several names are used on one feature by the surrounding local people, the majority principle is applied after checking the documents submitted by local public bodies. When plural names are very popular among people, both names are adopted as an exception and any one of them is noted with parentheses.

(5) As a writing system, the official Japanese characters and syllables are applied with such an exception that non-official writing system is thought to have some important meanings in its toponomic feature.

#### 4. Progress of standardization

The standardization in Japan was first made on the geographical names expressed on the general maps at scale 1:1,000,000 and next on the general maps at scale 1:500,000. The latest standardizing work is being carried out on the medium scale maps at scale from 1: 25,000 to 1:50,000 and about 15,000 names of the objected 60,000 have been prepared by the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical names.