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ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION
IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON PROGRESS IN THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE
FOURTH CONFERENCE

Report by South Africa**

Paper submitted by South Africa

* E/CONF.79/1.

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1. Background

Since this is the first United Nations Conference at which South Africa has had the privilege of presenting a report, it may be necessary to provide some background information.

(a) National Place Names Committee (NPNC)

The highest authority on the standardization of geographical names in South Africa is the National Place Names Committee (NPNC). Established in 1939, it comprises experts in Afrikaans, English, Khoekhoen, and the various African languages, as well as representatives of the English Academy of South Africa, the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, the Directorate of Surveys and Mapping, the State Language Services, the State Departments of Education and Training, Posts and Telecommunications, and Transport Services, and the Head of the Onomastic Research Centre of the Human Sciences Research Council.

Within the terms of reference of the NPNC fall names of cities, towns, townships, post offices, railway stations and sidings, motor-bus stopping places, and the like. New names of this type are submitted to the NPNC which considers them from linguistic, aesthetic and other angles, and recommends their approval or rejection. The final decision rests with the Minister of National Education.

Also submitted to the NPNC for consideration are names of topographical features. These are collected in the field by land surveyors attached to the Chief Directorate of Surveys and Mapping. Each name, with in-

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formation relating to type of feature, location in terms of latitude and longitude, etc., is entered on the appropriate questionnaire.

The work of the NPNC resulted in the publication in 1951 of *Official Place Names in the Union and South West Africa*, containing names approved to the end of 1948. An addendum was published in 1952. This publication was followed in 1978 by *Official Place Names in the Republic of South Africa and in South-West Africa*, containing names approved to 1 April 1977. As in the case of its predecessor, this work contains an alphabetical list of official place names (excluding names of topographical entities), with an indication of feature type and location. The introductions to both of these publications are devoted, *inter alia*, to principles and guidelines for prospective namers. To make these guidelines more readily available, the NPNC instructed three of its members, Dr P.E. Raper, Prof. G.S. Nienaber and Mr J.S.B. Marais, to compile an abbreviated manual. This was published in 1979 under the title *Manual for the Giving of Place Names*.

(b) Onomastic Research Centre (ORC)

In 1970 the Onomastic Research Centre (ORC) was established as a division of the Human Sciences Research Council. The terms of reference of the ORC include not only official place names, but all proper names. The ORC has the task of undertaking, facilitating and co-ordinating research into names. To fulfil these functions, an automated data base has been established into which have been or are being keyed all names data of the ORC.

The ORC is employing an IBM 4381 Model 1 computer. Data capture from various sources is accomplished using the STAIRS/AQUARIUS and subsequently KEYMASTER programmes. Hereby alphabetization and access to the data for i.a. research purposes are facilitated.

One of the tasks of the NPNC was to be the compilation of a list of geographical names in South Africa, including names of topographical features. For a number of reasons, i.a. the lack of a permanent secretariat, this task was never undertaken. Since the Onomastic Re-

search Centre has the necessary expertise and technical facilities, the NPNC requested it to compile not a list of geographical proper names, but a dictionary which will include situation, designation and, where possible, the derivation of the name. To enable it to fulfil this task, all questionnaires of the NPNC and the Directorate of Surveys and Mapping were made available to the ORC. These questionnaires have been computerized so that selected data may be retrieved. Thus the data base is available for research, but also for the compilation of gazetteers.

2. Implementation of UN Resolutions

Since 1984 the Republic of South Africa has had the privilege of participating in activities of the UNGEGN. Cognizance has been taken of United Nations resolutions, recommendations and requirements regarding the standardization of geographical names. With reference to Working Paper No. 7 of the Twelfth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) held in Geneva from 29 September to 7 October 1986, *List by Subject of Resolutions Adopted at the Various Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, the following efforts to comply with these Resolutions where relevant and possible are reported.

2. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

IV/24. Divisional activities

On the basis of English and Afrikaans being the official languages of the Republic of South Africa, this country is a member of both the United Kingdom Division and the Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD) of the UNGEGN. In addition to attending the 11th and 12th Sessions of the UNGEGN in Geneva in 1984 and 1986, the expert from South Africa, Peter E. Raper, attended the Sessions of the DGSD in 1985 and 1987. With a view to promoting the exchange of information, the results of the work of the Onomastic Research Centre are made available to as many other divisions and individual experts as possible.

4. Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors

IV/4. Publication of toponymic guidelines

Using the toponymic guidelines submitted by Austria (Document E/CONF.74/L.2.) as a sample of format and contents, South Africa prepared and submitted toponymic guidelines containing, *inter alia*, and as appropriate, the items detailed in the UN Recommendation. These guidelines served as Working Paper No. 19 of the 11th Session of the UNGEGN, while a second edition was submitted as Working Paper No. 6 of the 12th Session of the UNGEGN. Further editions will be prepared as and when necessary.

5. National Standardization

I/4. National standardization

As regards recommendation A, South Africa has a national names authority, the National Place Names Committee (NPNC), by means of which geographical names are standardized on a national basis. To a considerable extent the requirements itemized under Recommendations A, B, C and D are met. As regards Recommendation E, National Gazetteers, the NPNC has published two lists of officially approved names, namely in 1951 and 1978. A list of official place names approved between 1978 and 1986 is currently at the press.

These lists, compiled by the NPNC, however, do not contain names of topographical features. In order to fulfil the requirements of cartographers and others on an international level, the South African expert to the UNGEGN is compiling a national gazetteer for international use (type D as classified at the *Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, Vol. 1, p. 11). It will contain names standardized by the NPNC as well as unofficial variants, with an indication of the status of the names, and also other relevant information as recommended by the UN Conference.

In addition, a national gazetteer for national use is in preparation.

II/32 Dissemination of decisions by national authorities

In the forty-eight years of its existence the National Place Names Committee published lists of standardized names only twice, namely in 1951 and 1978. A third publication, incorporating names approved to 1986, is now in preparation.

At the instigation of the South African expert to the UNGEGN, the NPNC will in future publish its decisions on standardized names annually. These lists will be disseminated as widely as possible, but specifically to the United Nations Secretariate and members of the UNGEGN.

With a view to the dissemination of decisions of the NPNC, the Onomastic Research Centre includes the standardized names in its documents and publications where relevant and necessary. Thus in a recently published *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names*, officially standardized names are marked with an asterisk. In addition the guidelines and principles followed by the NPNC in standardizing geographical names are included in the introduction to this book.

8. Terminology (including glossaries)

II/16. Uniformity of presentation of glossaries

Cognizance has been taken of this Recommendation. Accordingly, the South African National Gazetteer for International Use at present in preparation will include the alphabetized glossaries of the designatory terms, generic terms, abbreviations, recurring name elements, etc., as detailed in the recommendation. Where these terms and elements are in indigenous African or other languages which are not one of the official languages of the United Nations, the English translations will be provided for each.

10. Preparation of Gazetteers

II/35. Interim lists of standardized names

In accordance with this recommendation that countries be encouraged to publish concise lists of their geographical names, the *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (published in March 1987 by Lowry Publishers, Johannesburg) was prepared with due regard to as many as possible of the items listed in recommendation I/4.E, but in each case the language of origin (if not English) and the origin or meaning of the name are given and, in some cases, historical data relating to the feature. Although not strictly a "concise list", it does include the names of some 2 000 of the most important features in Southern Africa, with an indication of which have been officially standardized.

As stated previously, however, a national gazetteer for international use is in preparation, in accordance with recommendation E of resolution 4 of the First UN Conference, resolution 16 of the Second UN Conference, and resolution 2 of the Third UN Conference.

13. Automated Data Processing

I/3 Automatic data processing

For the purposes of its own research, the Onomastic Research Centre utilizes an IBM computer. The data base contains many thousands of geographical names, including the data of the NPNC and the Directorate of Surveys and Mapping. This data base is constantly being enlarged and updated. It makes provision for *inter alia* the following items:

Name; designation/type of feature; location in terms of administrative division, latitude and longitude, etc.; language(s) of origin; meaning/etymology of the name; components comprising the name; source.

The data base can thus easily be used for the compilation of gazetteers and, indeed, such print-outs are available for geographical names in

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the Cape Province and Natal, and in South-West Africa/Namibia, taken from the Topo-cadastral Series 1:250 000 and Topographical Sheet 1:1 000 000 respectively.

Although one and the same computerized data base may be used for the compilation of gazetteers and the generating of names for emplacement on maps, this is not always necessarily the case. In South Africa these functions are separated, the Chief Director of Surveys and Mapping being responsible for the drawing of official maps.

The nature of the gazetteers being compiled by the ORC is such that a more comprehensive data base is required than that normally utilized for map-name generation and emplacement. A different type-face, too, will probably be employed in the publication of the gazetteers, since they may be printed by commercial concerns.

The problem of alphabetizing has not been fully solved. The same feature may have different names in different languages, eg. Cape Town - Kaapstad; Lake Mentz - Mentzmeer; Pretoria - Tshwane.

To solve this problem the gazetteers are written in English, and the toponyms are entered alphabetically in English. Under the names in other languages, as well as under widely diverging variant spellings and alternate names for the feature, cross-references are given to the English name.

Should the national gazetteer for national use be translated, for example into Afrikaans, the standardized Afrikaans form of such names will be primary, with cross-referencing elsewhere.

In instances where the generic term precedes the specific, e.g. Lake Mentz, the main entry is given under Lake, while under Mentz a cross-reference is given. The same applies to toponyms involving the definite article, and to those with determiners such as East, West, North, South, Little, Big, Old, New and so forth.

Since the computer has no facility for reproducing IPA symbols, the pronunciation of toponyms may receive attention at a later stage.

Difficulties are foreseen, however, for even in English and Afrikaans the same name is pronounced differently. Names derived from Khoekhoen, San and the African languages are very problematic and will require research in the field.

14. Exonyms

II/29. Limiting of exonyms

In the national gazetteer for international use an indication is given of officially standardized names. Exonyms for these names, where they occur, for example in unofficial languages spoken in the country, are indicated as variants, with the standardized form also given. In the preparation of this gazetteer, however, cognizance is taken of resolution III/19.

IV/20. Reduction of exonyms

With a view to encouraging cartographers and other map editors to publish the nationally accepted standard name along with the exonym, the South African expert to the UNGEGN presents a paper on this topic at the Fourth Southern African Names Congress (Stellenbosch, 29 September - 1 October 1987).

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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that this is crucial for the company's financial health and for providing reliable information to stakeholders.

2. The second part of the document outlines the specific procedures for recording transactions. It details the steps from identifying a transaction to entering it into the accounting system, ensuring that all necessary details are captured.

3. The third part of the document discusses the role of the accounting department in monitoring and controlling the company's financial performance. It highlights the importance of regular reviews and reporting to management.

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