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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 Kenya

Paper submitted by Kenya

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FIFTH U.N. CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

MONTREAL, 19 - 31 AUGUST 1987

REPORT BY KENYA

Since the Fourth Conference held at Geneva in 1982 substantial achievements have been made in the field collection and office processing of geographical names in Kenya. One major project just completed involved collecting, processing and depicting on topographic and administrative maps the names of all administrative units. The country-wide project was embarked on after realization that many administrative units had been renamed and a large number of new ones created sometimes without the information reaching the Standing Committee on Geographical Names. Most of the new and renamed units are the smallest administrative divisions, which also form the basic units used in the national statistics, as for example during population census. As the field stage of the programme has just ended it has not yet been possible to establish the final figures of the additional new and renamed units. The information is expected after the preliminary office treatment of the names which is currently in progress.

The second main activity has been the continuous extension of new topographic mapping. Kenya has been planned to be fully covered with two main topographic map series, namely at 1:250,000 and 1:50,000 scales. The 1:250,000 topographic map series has been completed. However of the planned 800 map sheets of the 1:50,000 topographic map series only about two thirds have been completed. Over the rest one third of the country not covered by the 1:50,000 series the only basic topographic maps available are of an old series at 1:100,000 scale. The policy of the government has been to replace the old series with an up-to-date 1:50,000 scale maps.

It is during the extension of this new 1:50,000 scale topographic mapping that collection and standardization of geographical names has been continued.

The 1:100,000 scale maps were the first maps ever made for the areas involved and mostly date back to the period when facilities and procedures of collecting and processing names had not been streamlined. During that time there were not enough personnel to deal with place names in the various languages and dialects. Many unavoidable errors were bound to occur.

For this new mapping renaming of features and correcting spelling have thus been common activities.

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Revision of the old 1:50,000 scale maps has generated many new names during the period. Most of these maps were published during the 1960's and 1970's and due to the various constraints their revision is not always up-to-date. Thus during the period under review revision work has been a major activity.

On international co-operation Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania have been assisting each other in collecting and standardising geographical names along their common border. Currently the United Republic of Tanzania is remapping its northern area at 1:50,000 and Kenya has been co-operating in any information related to geographical names along the border. The place names processed during the exercise are also part of Kenya's programme. They are names of features in Kenya or common to both countries.

It is estimated that approximately 9000 place names on 250 map sheets have been dealt with by the Standing Committee on Geographical Names since the last conference.

Kenya has been working on the toponymic guidelines for map and other editors. Although some forms of guidelines have been existing none has been very comprehensive. The final official version of guidelines is thus expected by the end of 1987.

The Survey of Kenya has however printed brief toponymic guidelines for the 4th edition of the National Atlas of Kenya which is expected to be published by the end of the year. The guidelines however concentrate more on spelling of geographical names in Kenya as stipulated by the Standing Committee on Geographical Names. The first edition of this atlas contained guidelines which gave more details including pronunciation.

A small gazetteer has also been finalized during the period under review. The gazetteer, also compiled for the 4th edition of the national atlas, contains approximately 2,000 place names which appear in the atlas. This is an expansion of the gazetteer contained in the out-dated third edition. However the second edition of the national official standard names gazetteer still stands as last published in 1978. It was published by the United States Board of Geographical names in collaboration with the Survey of Kenya and contains over 30,000 place names. Since then new place names have only been entered in the revision copy. Though no plans have been made so far publishing of the third edition is currently being contemplated.
