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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

Development on the standardization of geographical names  
in China since the Fourth United Nations Conference on  
Standardization of Geographical Names

Paper submitted by China

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Since the Fourth United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names, great progress has been made on standardization of geographical names in China in the following aspects:

- I. Institutions for the management of geographical names were further strengthened.

As approved by the State Council of China, China Geographical Names Committee was reorganized after 1982. The Committee now comprises 25 members from 21 departments, with the Minister for Urban and Rural Construction and Environment Protection as its Chairman. The administrative body of the Committee is also under the supervision of the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environment Protection. Entrusted by the State Council, China Geographical Names Committee is responsible for the administration of the work of geographical names work of the whole country.

In recent years, administration organizations on geographical names in provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have also been further strengthened. Chairmanship of the subcommittees on geographical names in provinces are usually taken by deputy governors or secretaries general of the provincial governments. Leading organizations, and administrative bodies for geographical names have been set up successively in prefectures, cities and counties.

- II. Nation-wide investigation on geographical names has been basically completed.

China is a country with vast territory, complicated languages and various geographical names. To realize the standardization of geographical names, it is necessary to find out the basic situation and existing problems on geographical names. Not long after its establishment, China Geographical Names Committee decided to carry out nation-wide investigation on geographical names. The investigation was organized and implemented with a city or a county as a basic unit. The investigation required a full survey of place names on the basis of topographic maps at the scales of 1:2,000 or 1:5,000 for cities and at the scale of 1:50,000 for counties. The major items to be investigated were: the name in Chinese characters, Pinyin (Chinese Phonetic Alphabets), alias, category, geographic position etc. For important geographical names, their origin, evolution, meaning and local history, geography, economy and culture concerned were

also investigated, and general information for them are compiled. For geographical names in minority languages, in addition to the above-mentioned items, investigation on the kinds of languages, meaning and minority written forms was required. At present, nation-wide investigation on geographical names in mainland has been basically completed except Tibet and some other areas. According to the preliminary statistics, about 6,000,000 entries of names of places on land and nearly 20,000 names for islands, reefs and sea areas, have been investigated. On the basis of this investigation and in accordance with the Preliminary Rules on Giving or Changing Place Names in China promulgated by the State Council, place names with the following defects were carefully checked up and standardized: places without names, one place with multiple names, one name for several places, one name with multiple written forms, one name with several spelling forms, names with inaccurate transliteration, names with unproper characters, names not in keeping with facts, ect. According to the statistics provided by 15 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, during the investigation, more than 120,000 entries of place names were standardized and nearly 70,000 places were newly named. Through the above-mentioned work, problems of confusion in place names were generally solved, and a solid foundation has been laid for future work on geographical names in China.

III. The management system for archives and data on geographical names has been established.

Through the nation-wide investigation on geographical names, a large number of archives and data on geographical names have been obtained, which arose great attention by the national department of archives. As a result, the archives on geographical names were listed as an important part of national archives. In order to strengthen the management of the above-mentioned archives, revise them in time, and provide better service for the use by all the side concerned, China Geographical Names Committee and State Archives Bureau of China issued "Provisional Rules on the Management of National Archives of Geographical Names". In 1984, it was decided to set up the National Archives on Geographical Names. Archives or offices on geographical names are also being established gradually in provinces, prefectures, cities and counties.

In recent years, experiments on storage and retrieval of geographical names information with the application of computers have been made in the Department of Toponymy, Research Institute of Surveying and Mapping, and in the Secretariat of Shanxi Provincial Subcommittee on Geographical Names, and preliminary results have been achieved.

IV. A gazetteer of the People's Republic of China is being compiled.

In 1982, China Geographical Names Committee, together with other departments, decided to compile and publish A Gazetteer

of the People's Republic of China. The Gazetteer will consist of entries 80,000 - 100,000 of place names and will be divided into 31 volumes, i.e. in addition to a general volume on national important place names, one volume will be published by each of the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government. There are altogether about 15,000,000 characters in the Gazetteer. A bound volume will be published after the publication of all the 31 volumes. The gazetteer will systematically introduce the standard written form, pronunciation, origin, meaning, evolution, location of main place names in China as well as local physical and geographical features, and conditions of social history, economy and culture. It is going to be a large-scale and comprehensive reference book on geographical names. At present, the volume of Jiangsu Province has been published, and other volumes are under preparation and will be published in succession. The compiling work of all the volumes are planned to be completed by 1990.

V. The standardization of rendering foreign place names into Chinese characters has been promoted.

In order to unify the transliteration of foreign place names into Chinese characters, China Geographical Names Committee issued in 1978 The General Rules on the Transliteration of Foreign Place Names into Chinese Characters, and Tables of rendering into Chinese characters from the languages of English, French, Spanish, German, Russian and Arabic. The transliteration tables for 44 languages, such as Romanian, Mongolian, Czech and Hungarian, were drafted afterwards. The Manual on Transliteration of Foreign Place Names, World Gazetteer and The Manual on Transliteration of Place Names of the United States of America were compiled and published in succession. The manuals on transliteration of place names of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union have been compiled and will be published in the near future.

VI. Laws and regulations on the management of geographical names have been made and formulated.

In order to provide laws and regulations for the management of geographical names of the whole country, the State Council of China promulgated in 1979 Provisional Rules on Giving or Changing Place Names in China. With the development of geographical names work in China, the State Council of China promulgated in 1986 Regulations on the Management of Geographical Names in China. This is the first time for the Chinese government to issue comprehensive laws and regulations concerning the management of geographical names. It has played and will play an important role in promoting the work on the management of geographical names in China. In 1984, China Geographical Names Committee, China Committee on Characters Reform and National Bureau of Surveying and Mapping of China

jointly promulgated Rules on the Spelling of Place Names of

China with Chinese Phonetic Alphabets (the part of place names in Han characters). To help survey teams solve problems on transliterating place names in minority languages during their field survey work, National Bureau of Surveying and Mapping and Military Bureau of Surveying and Mapping revised and published in 1986, rules of place names transliteration for three kinds of languages: Mongolian, Uygur and Tibetan (Lhasa Dialect).

VII. Study on toponymy has been furthered.

Progress made on geographical names work in recent years and great results achieved in the investigation of geographical names have offered advantageous condition for the study on toponymy. Chinese Research Society of Toponymy is now under preparation. Several provinces have established societies of geographical names or research society of toponymy. Some institutes and colleges have offered lectures on toponymy and set up on-job correspondence teaching courses on toponymy. Some journals and periodicals are published to the public such as Toponymy Knowledge and Collection on Toponymy. Treatises on toponymy already published include Collected Works on Toponymy, Study on Toponymy (the first and second volumes), Discussion on Toponymy, etc.

In general, with the attention paid by the governments at all levels, the collaboration of various departments and efforts made by people in the field of geographical names, great progress has been made on the work of geographical names in China. However, some of the above-mentioned work still remains to be completed by our continuous hard work. In a large country like China, the standardization of geographical names faces great tasks in the future. The people in the field of geographical names in China will continue to work hard to make greater achievements.

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