



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.79/INF/35
13 August 1987

ENGLISH ONLY

Fifth United Nations Conference
on the Standardization of
Geographical Names
Montreal, 18-31 August 1987
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

National report on the Standardization of
geographical names **

Paper submitted by Islamic Republic of Pakistan

* E/CONF.79/1.

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NATIONAL REPORT
ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
FROM
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN.

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Presented at the
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
AT MONTREAL, CANADA
FROM 18TH TO 30TH AUGUST, 1987.

NATIONAL REPORT ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES FROM ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN: /

Introduction:

Pakistan is a land of variegated topography stretching from glaciated regions in the north to the deserts in the south east, rugged and barren hills in the west to the fertile plains in the east with Arabian Sea in the south. It thus embraces almost all type of natural features. The total area of the country is about 790, 100 sq.kilometres and is covered by 1470 maps on scale 1:50,000, 118 maps on scale 1/250,000 and 10 maps on scale 1/1 million. Survey of Pakistan is the only Government Organization for surveying and mapping of the country and standardization of geographical names.

National Standardization:

Pakistan inherited the Hunterian System of transliteration of names at the time of its birth. It was evolved by Dr. Hunter and adopted by the then Govt. of India after certain modifications for transliteration of names from regional languages of British India to Roman alphabets. This system is working very satisfactorily in Pakistan, because all the regional languages of Pakistan i.e. Punjabi, Sindhi, Baluchi, Pashto, Kashmiri, Brahui, Saraiki etc. can be easily written in the alphabets of national language Urdu and then transliterated into Roman alphabets in English system.

The primary authority for the spelling of names is, however, the National Gazetteer which is followed even at variance with the Hunterian System, unless a change is approved by the Surveyor General of Pakistan. The Hunterian System has been fully explained in the Departmental Book named "THB Chapter VI" as well as the booklet named 'Transliteration

of Names to Roman characters on Survey of Pakistan maps'. Transliteration of geographical names outside Pakistan is done in accordance with the system adopted by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names of the Royal Geographical Society and included in their list. In case, if any name is not available in the PCGN list, the name as appearing on the official map of transfrontier countries is accepted.

i- **Field Collection of Names:**

The new or revised names are picked up by the surveyors in the field during the normal course of survey on scale of 1/50,000, as spoken by the local people and recorded in Urdu script in the Field Book as well as on the List of Names on Form 22 Topo.

Before leaving for the area of work, the surveyors are supplied with the List of Names appearing on old maps for their guidance. To eliminate any ambiguity or confusion in the pronunciation of local names, it is always the policy to send those surveyors who are either locals or conversant with the regional languages. The correct spelling of names in Urdu alphabets by use of vowels, diacritical and orthographic signs are got verified by the local officials in the field. The verified names are then transliterated into Roman characters, in the field, by the Survey Officers who supervise the work of the field surveyors.

ii- **Office Treatment of Names:**

The traditional processing methods are used for office treatment of names. Automated Data Processing has not yet been adopted. The List

of Names prepared by the field surveyors, verified by local officials and transliterated by the field Survey Officers in Roman characters, are processed further in the offices and checked with the names appearing on the old maps and other documents and corrected where necessary in the Roman Characters. The names so approved are then printed on the new maps of Survey of Pakistan. The List of Names are then kept with other field records of the Map Sheet in the Records Office of the Department. Since the Hunterian System is simple, except for a short bar over a, i and u for denoting long pause, the standardization of names from Urdu script to Roman script is quite easy.

Treatment of Names in Multilingual Areas:

Pakistan has one national language i.e. Urdu. The dialects of all regional languages are written in Urdu script and their transliteration is done in Roman script satisfactorily. There is thus no problem of bi-lingual or multi-lingual names.

National Names Authority:

There is no separate National Names Authority for standardization of geographical names. This job is being done by Survey of Pakistan, as mentioned above, in addition to its own job of preparing topographical and geographical maps of the country. It is however strongly felt that there should be a separate body which should exclusively look after the standardization of national and international geographical names.

National Gazetteers:

The Imperial Gazetteers published under the authority of British India in 1908 are still being considered

authentic for standardized names. These Gazetteers were prepared alphabetically in 26 volumes from A to Z for the whole sub-continent and contained useful information about the geographical names, their location and administrative divisions etc. The District names in the Gazetteers also give additional information about the physical aspects, administration, history, population, agriculture, forest, trade and communication etc. of the District. In the beginning of the Gazetteers, in the introductory note, some guide lines have been given about standardization of names from regional languages to Roman characters. There is also a map on scale 1/10,000,000 in each volume showing the main geographical names mentioned in each Gazetteer. Since the scale of maps is small, the number of names is very much limited. These Gazetteers therefore cannot be termed as Gazetteers of Names, because they usually serve the purposes of Local and Provincial Governments. The topographers and geographers some times use these Gazetteers for the reference of main geographical names. There is imperative need to compile alphabetically the lists of geographical names as appearing on scale 1/50,000 and prepare National Gazetteer of Names.

A Glossary of about 1700 geographical names, with their meanings in various Pakistani and other Asiatic Languages, is available and serves as a guide to Survey of Pakistan maps.

Toponymic Education:

The Field Surveyors and the Survey Officers are imparted training in toponomy in Survey Training Institute when they join Survey of Pakistan. They are tested in transliteration of geographical names from Urdu script to Roman script at the end of their training courses. Though the present system is meeting the requirements of the country satisfactorily, further development in the toponymic education will be beneficial.

Exonyms:

The national language of Pakistan is Urdu, which is composite of Arabic, Persian and Hindi. These are the languages which are also spoken in the neighbouring countries. There is therefore little possibility of existence of an exonym in Urdu language.

Linguistic/Geographical Divisions:

Pakistan has been placed in two Geographical Divisions i.e. 'Asia South-West other than Arabic' and 'India Division'. Regional meetings of the former Division were held between Iran-Afghanistan, Iran - Pakistan and Iran - Pakistan - Afghanistan during 1973, 1974 and 1977 respectively. It was agreed in the Regional meeting of Pakistan-Iran held in 1974 that:-

- i- There was no difference in the transliteration of 23 letters of both the alphabets of Urdu and Persian and complete agreement can be reached if the macrons and cedillas are removed from the transliteration of homophones on 7 letters in the Persian language.
- ii- Three letters and eleven aspirated consonants in Urdu alphabet which do not exist in Persian alphabets will continue to be transliterated in Pakistani system.
- iii- Insertion of accents on last letters of words ending with a,i,u. like Bābā̄ which are at present being omitted and written as Bāba in Pakistani system will be considered by Pakistan.
- iv- The words which are pronounced differently in two languages will continue to be transliterated according to their existing systems.

It was agreed in the Regional Meeting of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan held in 1977 that all the three countries have the same system of transliteration for most of the letters whereas there is difference between them in some of the letters mostly due to the reason that such letters are not common for all the three countries and partly due to the reason that they are pronounced differently in different countries. It was decided that the efforts shall be made by the respective countries to minimise the existing differences in the transliteration of names as far as practicable for consideration during the subsequent conference.

But it is unfortunate that no regional meeting was held afterwards. It is desirable that the regional meetings of this Division should be held regularly to sort out the remaining differences for standardization of geographical names.

No meeting of 'India Division' has been held so far. It is perhaps due to lack of coordination. Urdu is not only the national language of Pakistan but also the regional language of India. Since both the countries are using the same Hunterian system of Romanisation, it will be quite easy to standardize the geographical names of the two countries.

International Cooperation in the Standardization of Geographical Names:/

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations is no doubt making valuable efforts for the last two decades to achieve agreed systems of romanisation of geographical names in the different regions of the world. It is highly essential that all the nations should therefore fully participate in U.N. Conferences of Geographical Names and the sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts and mutually cooperate in solving the difficulties arising out of the national and international standardizations. For this purpose, it is suggested that regular meetings should be held at the regional levels between the

member countries of geographical/linguistic divisions to sort out their regional problems. The technically advanced countries should come forward and lend a helping hand to the backward countries by providing expert advice and sharing their experience and knowledge in preparation of Gazetteers and Dictionaries of Geographical Names, setting up of National Names Authorities and establishment of Automatic Data Processing system etc. etc. It is praiseworthy that the U.N. Group of Experts has made great contributions towards standardization of Geographical names in their 12 sessions during the last two decades inspite of their limitations. They should be therefore encouraged in their efforts to continue to work as enthusiastically as before and be placed on a permanent basis with U.N. financial assistance, so that the experts from all over the world can afford to meet regularly and achieve the objectives as laid down by the U.N.O.