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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 on the state of the standardization
of geographical names in Japan

Paper submitted by Japan

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Report on the State of the Standardization of Geographical
Names in JAPAN

(Item No.4 of the Provisional Agenda)

The state of the standardization of geographical names and corresponding activities in Japan since the Fourth United Nations Conference are as follows:

1. Standardization of Domestic Names

There are no governmental agencies which have the centralized function of collection, registration and standardization of geographical names in Japan. However, several agencies and organizations have been dealing with this in connection with their own administrative work, and through these activities, progress has been made in the consistent standardization of geographical names.

Names of territorial administrative units and settlements are controlled by laws and regulations. There is no confusion of the spelling and pronunciation and of corresponding territorial areas, so efforts to collect and standardize them again are unnecessary. Therefore, the great effort of standardization has been made on the names of natural features and conventional place names.

The agencies engaged in mapping, namely, the Geographical Survey Institute and the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency, have been collecting names in order to enter them on their maps and charts. In order to coordinate the names used by the two

agencies, the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names was established and has been convening two or three times a year. The present activities are concentrated on standardizing the names of almost 80,000 natural features and other conventional place names to be used on 1:25,000 scale maps and charts with the exclusion of the names stipulated by the laws mentioned above. About 25,000 geographical names have been standardized already, and by the efforts of the committee, close to 12,000 names have been adopted since the Fourth UN Conference.

2. Names of Undersea Features

The names of the undersea features adopted by the GEBCO Sub-committee on Geographical Names of Ocean Bottom Features as a result of international cooperation and approved by IHO are being used exclusively.

The names of undersea features discovered and observed by Japanese agencies have been determined through the Assembly on Geographical Names of Oceans and Bottom Features, which are held with the members of agencies associated with ocean and undersea observation.

Since the Fourth UN Conference, 121 names (Seamount:25, Rise: 51, Plateau:14, Basin: 8, Miscellaneous: 23) have been adopted and the total number of names is 680 at the present time.

3. Antarctic Geographical Names

The naming of natural features and important places which have been discovered and observed by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition is expedited by the following

procedure.

The director of the National Institute of Polar Research, seeking counsel from the Antarctic Place-Names Committee of Japan, prepares a draft of names. On the basis of the draft, the names are selected at the general convention of the Headquarters of the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition.

The names of 276 places have been adopted and among them, 9 names (Natural feature: 8, Observation point:1) have been newly selected since the Fourth UN Conference.

4. Romanization of Geographical Names

No particular progress has been made on the Romanization system in Japan since the Fourth UN Conference of Geographical Names.

As to the Roman spelling of Japanese, Two systems of Romanization of "Kunrei Siki" which is slightly modified to "Nihon Siki" (Japanese system) and "Syûsei Hebon Siki" (Modified Hepburn system) have been advertised and wide spread for a long time. Considering the historical background and the present situation, it appears to be quite difficult to unite these two systems rapidly.

On the other hand, geographical names on Japanese official maps and charts for international use have been spelled by the "Kunrei Siki" method. The Hydrographic Department has already adopted the "Kunrei Siki" spelling method on its charts. The Geographical Survey Institute adopted the spelling method for geographical names on its

maps and gazetteers in 1984, It is based on "Kunrei Siki", but allows the use of the other systems (of "Syûsei Hebon Siki" and "Nihon Siki") for exceptional cases excluding national base maps.

ANNEX

Agencies and Organizations concerned with the Treatment of Geographical Names

1. Local Administrative Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs

The Administrative Bureau is treating general affairs of the names and territories of "Gun"(County) and "Si(city), "Mati" (town), "Mura"(Village) in accordance with the Local Autonomy Law. As to the names of subvillages of "Si", "Mati" and "Mura", the concerned local public bodies are dealing with them.

2. National Institute of Polar Research, Ministry of Education

The National Institute of Polar Research is the facility for the common use of universities and is conducting research and surveys on polar science as well as the polar research expedition. Naming of natural features and other places has been conducted, seeking counsel from the Antarctic Place-Names Committee.

3. Antarctic Place-Names Committee of Japan

The committee was established as the advisory organ of the director of the National Institute of Polar Research. It contains experts and experienced personnel associated with antarctic observation and of staff officials of the corresponding administrative agencies (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

4. Hydrographic Department, Maritime Safety Agency of the Ministry of Transport

The Department has governmental responsibility for oceanic surveys and observation, and preparation of nautical charts. It has been collecting geographical names in territorial waters and its surroundings for its nautical and bathymetric charts.

5. Assembly on Geographical Names of Oceans

The assembly has convened to examine and determine the geographical names of the ocean bottom features discovered by Japanese agencies and others. It is organized with members from the agencies and organizations associated with the observation of ocean and sea areas.

6. Geographical Survey Institute, Ministry of Construction

The Geographical Survey Institute is responsible for the ground control point survey and the preparation of national base maps. It has been accumulating geographical names to describe them on base maps.

7. Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names

The committee has convened periodically to standardize the geographical names collected by the Geographical Survey Institute and the Hydrographic Department.