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Mr. Chairman,

It is a great pleasure for us to have the opportunity of attending the current session and discussing with the experts from other countries the question of international standardization of geographical names. First of all, allow me, in the name of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names of the State Bureau of Surveying and Cartography of the People's Republic of China, to express thanks to you all for the welcome you have accorded us. This is the first time we attend a session of the group of experts, and we are not fully acquainted with the situation in many respects. So we'll leave some questions for the moment and only discuss the standardization of Chinese geographical names.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, earth-shaking changes have taken place in the features of Chinese society along with the vigorous development of socialist revolution and socialist construction. At the same time, there have been great changes in China's geographical names. The work of standardization of geographical names has been given much attention by all those concerned. With the care of our Government, we have done a lot of work in standardizing Chinese geographical names.

China is a socialist country. In her external relations, she adheres to the principle of proletarian internationalism and is firmly opposed to big-power chauvinism. After the founding of New China, we first of all abolished geographical names tinged with big-power chauvinism, which were left over by history and were detrimental to good-neighbourly relations with our friendly neighbours.

China is a unified multi-national country with more than fifty minority nationalities. We have always stood

for equality of all the fraternal nationalities. After the founding of New China, we made necessary alterations in geographical names showing big-Han chauvinism, which were a legacy of past reactionary governments.

Along with the development of industrial and agricultural production, the setting up of people's communes, the readjustment of administrative divisions, the growth of farm improvement and irrigation projects and cultural, educational and public health undertakings and the extension of traffic lines, old geographical names have been changed while new ones have appeared by tens of thousands. The formulation of new names and the editing of old ones are the first step in our work of standardizing Chinese geographical names.

Standardization of the written forms of geographical names is closely linked with the reform of the Chinese written language.

Chairman Mao, the great leader of the Chinese people, has pointed out: "the Chinese written language must be reformed in the direction of adopting a phonetic alphabet as is common with the languages of the world." He has also pointed out that a lot of work should be done in preparation for the romanization of Chinese (Han) characters; before their romanization, Chinese characters must be simplified in the interest of present use.

According to Chairman Mao's instructions, our State Council published in 1956 The Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters. Then in 1964 the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, on the basis of summing up the experience of popularizing this scheme, compiled A Comprehensive Glossary of Simplified Characters, thus creating favourable conditions for the standardization of geographical names written in Chinese characters.

Now I would like to dwell upon the question of spelling Chinese geographical names with the Chinese phonetic alphabet.

In 1958 The Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet was published, which had been submitted by the State Council and approved by the National People's Congress. This scheme, which summarizes the historical experience of the Chinese people in trying to formulate a Chinese phonetic alphabet over a long period of time, is our official scheme for the romanization of Chinese characters.

The publication of The Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet was an important contribution to the standardization of romanized Chinese geographical names. It is China's established policy to spell Chinese geographical names with the Chinese phonetic alphabet. The spelling with the Chinese phonetic alphabet is already in use in China in the case of names of telegraph offices, weather stations, railway stations and street names. In 1974 a Map of the People's Republic of China spelt with the Chinese phonetic alphabet was published in China, which provides a good foundation for the standardization of romanized Chinese geographical names.

China is a vast country with many dialects, we have made standard spoken Chinese as the criterion in spelling the geographical names of the Han language with the Chinese phonetic alphabet. Where pronunciations vary, the standard pronunciation approved by the Committee for Checking Pronunciation in Standard Spoken Chinese is to be followed. The Xinhua Dictionary published in China in 1972 gives the standard pronunciation of more than 7,000 Chinese characters and can meet the common need for spelling geographical names.

The standardization of the written forms of Chinese geographical names also involves the standardized use of a minority nationality language to write geographical names of that nationality and other nationalities and the standardized use of Chinese characters and the Chinese phonetic alphabet in transcribing minority nationality geographical names. In pursuance of the policy of equality and unity of nationalities, we have worked out methods for transcribing the geographical names of several minority nationalities with the Chinese alphabet, among which those for the Uygur, Mongol and Zang nationalities have already been published. This also plays a big part in promoting uniform and standardized Chinese geographical names.

The above is the general situation of the work of standardization of Chinese geographical names.

Finally, we would like to state our views on the work of international standardization of geographical names.

1. We hold that the work of international standardization of geographical names must be carried out with the aim of facilitating economic and cultural exchanges and friendly co-operation among the peoples of all countries. Therefore, a reasonable solution should be sought through full consultations without imposing one's views upon others, still less is it permissible to use the international standardization of geographical names as a pretext for encroaching on the sovereign rights of other countries.

2. The Roman alphabet has been adopted by the majority of countries in the world. We approve of the use of the Roman alphabet, that is, its 26 letters with some diacritical marks, as the common symbols for international standardization of geographical names.

3. International standardization of geographical names should be based on the national standardization of geographical names of each country. In standardizing romanized geographical names, the opinion of the sovereign country concerned should be respected. The standard Roman spellings chosen by each country for the geographical names within its sovereign jurisdiction should be adopted as part of the international standard.

4. The international standard names of geographical features common to several countries should be decided by the countries concerned through consultation. The standardization of names of geographical features in international areas beyond national jurisdiction should be decided by all countries through consultation. In the work of international standardization of geographical names, all countries, big or small, should be equal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.