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English only

**Eighth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of
geographical names since the Seventh Conference**

National report of Vanuatu

Submitted by Vanuatu**

* E/CONF.94/1.

** Prepared by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

1.0 Introduction.

The Government of Vanuatu did not attend the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. A brief background to the Republic of Vanuatu is therefore in order:

Date of Independence:	The Republic of Vanuatu became independent on the 30 th July, 1980. Prior to Independence, it was known as New Hebrides (a French and British condominium)
Location:	South-West Pacific, south of the Solomon Islands, and north-west of New Caledonia.
Capital:	Port Vila (latitude - 17.7 degrees; longitude 168.3 degrees)
Population:	200,000 (2002 estimate)
Area:	12,190 km ²
Number of islands:	180 (inhabited)
Political System:	Multi-party Democracy.
Languages:	Bislama (Pidgin English), English and French, plus 105 local languages.
Human Development Index:	116 of 174 countries.
Topographic Maps:	One with spelling and names in French produced by Institute Geographique National (France) Another with spelling and names in English produced by British Directorate of Overseas Survey (Great Britain) Both map producers used the New Hebrides Official Standard Names Gazetteer produced by the United States of America's Board on Geographical Names in 1974. New maps were produced with the assistance of the Australian Government in 1984, using spelling and names in Bislama.
Vanuatu Official Gazetteer (VOG):	Not yet produced. The protocols etc for its production will follow upon attendance at this Geographical Names Conference.

2.0 Goals and National Programmes

The Government of Vanuatu has embarked upon a Comprehensive Reform Programme (CRP). It is essential for related policy preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation that there be maps available at the relevant scales and degrees of resolution. To this end, the Government, represented by the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, has embarked upon a topographic mapping exercise for all Vanuatu with the assistance of the Australian Government. This will supply maps at a 1:50 000 line map scale for all Vanuatu, together with composite orthophoto maps at 1:10,000 and 1:2 500 Urban maps.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Government of Vanuatu under this agreement — and also fundamental in the context of implementing the CRP — is to provide “a gazetteer of place names, including the spelling and geographical location of those places, to be used in the production of maps.”

3.0 Conclusion

Previous attempts to produce the VOG have been unsuccessful; this was largely due to other priorities being regarded as more pressing. Moreover, the fact that Vanuatu’s islands are scattered nature over a wide area and the polyglot nature of Vanuatu society present significant implementation difficulties. However, the responsibilities undertaken by the Government of Vanuatu under this current mapping project, the need for such maps for development planning, and the information that the Government hopes to gain through attendance at this Conference should combine to facilitate the production of the VOG within the short term required.
