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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION\

Report from the South African Geographical Names Council

(Submitted by South Africa)**

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REPORT FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES COUNCIL

The South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) is mandated by the Act of parliament (Act No. 118 of 1998) to advise the Minister responsible for arts and culture on the transformation and standardisation of geographical names in South Africa for official purposes.

In complying with this responsibility, the Council has set its principles, policies and objectives.

Council policies

Standardisation should be based on:

- the current orthographic rules of the languages from which the names are derived.
- the wishes and/or interests of the local population, provided these are not in conflict with the guiding principles.
- the historical use of the name.
- matters of redress, where names need to be changed on the basis of historical consideration;
- United Nations resolutions on the standardisation of geographical names;
- any other relevant factors which may be identified.

Council principles

- Each individual feature or entity should have only one official name.
- The following types of geographical names should generally be avoided:
 1. approved names of places elsewhere in South Africa;
 2. names in other countries, and names of countries;
 3. names of which the spelling or pronunciation is *so* close to that of an existing name that confusion might result;

4. names that are blasphemous, indecent, offensive, vulgar, anaesthetic or embarrassing;
5. names that are discriminatory or derogatory as regards race, colour, creed, gender, political affiliation or other social factors;
6. names consisting of personal names without a generic element;
7. names that may be regarded as an advertisement for a particular product, service or firm;
8. names of living persons.

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the Council are to

- ensure the standardisation of geographical names;
- facilitate the establishment of provincial geographical names committees;
- facilitate the transformation process for geographical names;
- promote the use of standardised South African geographical names at international level;
- ensure the implementation of standardised geographical names in south Africa; and
- promote awareness of the economic and social benefits of the standardisation of geographical names.

Corporate goals

Taking into account the history of geographical naming in South Africa, the Council will

- redress the imbalances caused by the lack of representivity in the previous naming system;
- correct the spelling of wrongly spelt geographical names;
- transform the naming process in South Africa;
- standardise all geographical names through the pro-active engagement of all stakeholders and role players.

VERVIEW OF THE COUNCIL

This report covers the period 2000 to the end of the financial year on 2002.

The SAGNC is an advisory body that advises the Minister of Arts Culture Science and Technology on the transformation of the naming process in South Africa. This body also facilitates the establishment of Provincial Geographical Names Committees.

The Council has advised the Minister on the proposed change of names of towns mainly from Limpopo province and on new names mainly from the Post Office.

Towns that have changed

- Ellisras to Lephale
- Nylstroom to Modimolle
- Potgietersrus to Mokopane
- Warmbaths to Bela-Bela
- Messina to Musina
- Pieterburg to Polokwane

It has facilitated the establishment of three provincial committees so far i.e. KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The other provinces are still in the process of finalising the establishment.

The Council through its sub-committees has published a booklet that outlines principles and procedures that should be followed when proposing a new name or a change thereof.

It has also finalised the application form that should be completed when one makes a proposal.

It has referred back to provinces a number of names that need to be reviewed, based on the fact that they may be wrongly

spelt or not acceptable to the people of that area by either being blasphemous, discriminatory or otherwise.

The Pan South African Language Board is seen as a major stakeholder when it comes to the orthographically rules of all the languages. Making use of its National Language Bodies (NLBs) it should advise the SAGNC on the new practical orthography of all the official languages of the country.

South Africa is the member of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). This world body took a resolution on the standardisation of geographical names that each individual feature or entity should have one official name. This means that we should avoid duplicating names like having approved names of places somewhere in South Africa or in other countries.

International meetings

- The chairperson of the South African Geographical Names Council attended the 29th International Geographical Congress in Seoul in Korea from 14-18 August 2000.
- The South African Names Society, in which the chairperson of SAGNC is a member, hosted the International Names Congress in May 2002. Representatives attended the congress from member countries of the Africa South Division like Mozambique and Namibia.