

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

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**National Standardization: Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors**

**Principles, Policies, and Procedures for Standardization of  
Geographical Names**

Submitted by Indonesia\*\*

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# **Principles, Policies, and Procedures for Standardization of Geographical Names**

## **I. Introduction**

### **a. Background**

Indonesia is an archipelagic state comprising land and sea of approximately 5 million sqkms with a topographic range from more than 4,000 m above sea level; to 6, 000 m below sea level. Being at the junction of three global tectonic plates, Indonesia has complex topographic and undersea features, such as: islands, river systems, lakes, mountains and mountain ranges, underwater volcanoes, trenches, ridges, basins, etc.. The archipelago is populated, since the early history of human settlement in the pre-Holocene period, by fluxes of population from Asia, Middle East, Europe and the Pacific to this dead-end region of the Eurasian Continent. Being a melting pot of all races, there are about 726 local languages<sup>1</sup> spoken on the islands which enrich the generic names of geographical features. Varieties of languages that create the unity language “Bahasa Indonesia” have an influence in writing and spoken names for geographical names that cause un-uniformity of names on maps.

Therefore, the National Team for Standardization of Topographical Names as the national geographical names authority has been established by the Presidential Regulation No. 112/2006, pursuant to the UN Resolution no. 4 of the First UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names in Geneva in 1967.

The formation of a geographical names authority is adapted to the current decentralization structure of the Government ‘s functions to the regional governments (Provinces, Regencies or Kabupatens, and Municipalities).

These principles, policies and procedures of topographical names standardization are prepared for references in the conduct of names standardization of topographic features in Indonesia, within the autonomous regional governments. Thereby all levels of governments, should adhere consistently to this ‘Principles, Policies and Procedures’.

### **b. Objective**

The objective of this document is to assist the government’s administrator, private sectors, map makers, educators, information provider and public at large on writing standard topographical names.

### **c. Scope**

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<sup>1</sup> Summer Institute of Languages.

The scope covers background, objective, scope, definition, languages, spelling policies and procedures in naming and changing names, principles in writing of names, sources (gazetteers and maps) and conclusions.

#### **d. Definition**

This part elaborates definition of terminology and other terms used in naming and standardization of geographical names.

## **II. National and Local Languages**

### **a. Indonesian Unity Language**

Being a country of multi-cultures, multi-ethnics, multi-religions and multi-languages, it is a *conditio sine qua non* to adopt a unitary national language, the Bahasa Indonesia, with Malays, the *lingua franca*, as the root of the modern Indonesia language enriched with local ethnic languages. The Indonesian language is based on Roman alphabet since 1900's. Hence, all topographic names must be written using standard spelling both in Indonesian and local languages.

### **b. Local languages**

Seven hundred and twenty six (726) local languages exist in Indonesia. Based on geographical distribution, 19 languages are on the islands of Java, Madura and Bali, 52 languages in Sumatra, 68 languages on the islands east of Jawa, namely Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, Sumba and Timor, 82 languages in Kalimantan (the Indonesian part of the island "Borneo", 114 languages in Sulawesi, 131 languages in Maluku and 265 languages in Papua.

Based on the respective native speakers, there are 13 local languages with native speakers above 1 million people. These are, the Javanese language (75,200,000 native speakers), the Sundanese language (27,000,000 native speakers), the Malay language (20,000,000 native speakers), the Madurese language (13,694,000 native speakers), The Minangkabau language (6,500,000 native speakers), the Balinese language (3,800,000 native speaker), Acehnese language (3,000,000 native speakers), the Sasak language in Lombok (2,100,000 native speakers), the Makasarese (1,600,000 native speakers), the language in Lampung (1,500,000 native speakers) and the Rejang language (1,000,000 native speakers).

The Center for Indonesia languages prepares only Manuals of Local Languages for dominant local languages.

### **c. Spelling**

For spelling of topographical names, the Indonesia Language Improved Spelling of 1976 should be used as reference guidelines.

### III. Principles, Policies and Procedures

#### a. Principles on Naming of Geographical Names

1. The use of Roman alphabet;
2. One name for one feature in the lowest administrative unit;
3. The use of local specific name;
4. The use of local generic name;
5. Avoid derogatory names against ethnics, indigenous customs, races, and religions;
6. Avoid the use of foreign name;
7. Avoid the use of name of person who is still alive;
8. Avoid the use of long name;
9. Avoid the use of mathematical form of name;
10. Avoid the use the name of institution as specific name of place name.

#### b. Policies on Naming of Geographical Names

1. The use of local names  
When two or more local names exist for one feature, based on two or more ethnic languages living in the area in the past, the adopted name should be selected for those names from the majority local language in the area; The other names should be registered as “other names” (allonyms).
2. The use of names of deceased person  
The personal names of geographic feature could be accepted after 10 years after the dead of the person. The National Names Authority should receives his biography why the name should be commemorated as geographical names for a geographic feature.
3. The use of local names for the generic element of geographical names  
Local generic name or generic name in local languages prevailing in a certain region should be maintained and used consistently;

For example: the generic name for “river” is “*sungai*” (Indonesian or Malays) is called *Ci* (West Java), *Wai* (Lampung, Seram, Buru, Nusa Tenggara Timur, certain areas in Papua), *Batang*, *Aek* (Central and North Sumatra), *Krueng* (Aceh), *Ai*, *Oi* (Eastern part of Indonesia) etc.

The generic name for “*island*” is *pulau* (Indon. or Malays), *Nusa*, *Meos*, *Pulo* (scattered in various areas), *Gili* (Bali, Lombok, Gorontalo), *Kiye* (Halmahaera), *Liito* (Gorontalo, Bolaangmongondow), etc/

### **c. Procedures on Naming of Topographical Names**

1. Proposal for new name, changing name, abolishing existing name, and combining names to become one name should follow the following steps from local people through the chief of the village to the chain of bureaucracy up to the governor of the Province.
2. The Governor through the Provincial Committee on the Standardization of Topographical Names (PCSTN) obtains advice on the feasibility of the proposed names and if agreed then submit the proposal to the Minister of Home Affairs as the National Team for Standardization of Topographical Names (NTSTN) Chair.
3. The NTSTN may invite advice from the National Group of Experts on its standard spelling, its meaning and its geographical location.
4. If all steps followed and agreed by all parties, then the new name will be put in the National Gazetteer and published at a later stage. If the name does not exist anymore, it will be deleted.
5. If the proposed name is a commemorative name, then another agreement should be sought through the respective regional people’s assembly and the national Parliament, as well as the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

## **IV. Sources**

1. Indonesia will develop a national information system for topographical names, and at present the website has been operational.
2. The National Gazetteers will be published by the NTSTN.

## **V. Conclusion**

The extended document on Principles, Policies and Procedures for the Standardization of Topographical Names is to assist the map makers, government administrators, private (non-governmental) institutions, mass media, educational institutions, information services and public at large in writing standard topographic features names. The consistency in writing standard topographical names in standard

Indonesian language is important to avoid confusion in the society and it expresses the Government concern in promoting the use of good Indonesian national language.