

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

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

**Country report of Vietnam:  
Activities on standardization of geographical names**

Submitted by Vietnam \*\*

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# **COUNTRY REPORT OF VIETNAM ACTIVITIES ON STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

## **Summary**

In Vietnam the organization responsible for standardization of geographical names is Department of Survey and Mapping (DOSM) belonging to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), this is the National Mapping Organization of Vietnam. Since the Eighth UN Conference, DOSM carried out many activities on standardization of geographical names of Vietnam. Main progress consisted of the following activities:

Creating a concise gazetteer of administrative unit names of all levels, which has been published for public use as a document of the National Gazetteer of Vietnam.

Setting up and implementing a big project on standardization of geographical names “Establishing an Information System of geographical names for cartographic mapping” which consisted of two groups of work: standardization of geographical names presenting in the Vietnamese world map and standardization of geographical names presenting in the National topographic maps. Some more details of these work are described in the report below.

By completion of this project Vietnam will be able to create the National gazetteer and geographical name database. This database is orientated as a component of the Vietnam National Spatial Database Infrastructure in future.

## **National Standardization**

Since the Eighth UN Conference on standardization of geographical names there are many endeavors in activity on this issue have been taken by Department of Survey and Mapping (DOSM) belonging to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Vietnam (MONRE) – This is a National Mapping Organization of Vietnam, who is currently responsible for standardization of geographical names in Vietnam. The following main activities have been made a big change for the situation of geographical names in Vietnam.

1. Since the year 2003, DOSM has organized a group of specialists specialized on homogeneity and standardization of geographical names for cartographic mapping and it has been carried out several work in this respect. There has been created a concise gazetteer of administrative unit names (the names of administrative units of Vietnam). This gazetteer has been completed in the year 2006. Using this Gazetteer the user can find out some useful information of the name like official approved name, document of its sealed approval, date approval, population of the administrative unit, coordinates of the central point of administrative unit, former used names, name of administrative unit of higher level to which it belongs to. There are 3 administrative levels in Vietnam: Province/city under central authority, district, commune and this gazetteer has been covered all of these levels. The administrative unit names were designed with linking to a digital administrative

map of Vietnam scale 1:1,000,000 and user can find out position of the name on the map and other relevant information in attribute table.

The above mentioned gazetteer has got a permission of Vietnam Government to proclaim it as a document of the National Gazetteer and it has been issued in paper form as well as in digital form (in CD-R). It will be available as well on the internet in coming time.

2. In the year 2004, DOSM has also set up a project, called “Establishing an Information System of geographical names for cartographic mapping”. This project consisted of two groups of work. The first group is standardizing all geographical names representing in the Vietnamese world map of scale 1:30, 000,000 and putting them into data set for use and maintain. The second group of work is standardizing all Vietnamese geographical names representing in the National topographic maps of scale 1:25,000, putting them into a data set for use and maintain.

This is a first big project on standardization of geographical names in Vietnam, which costs about 35 billions Vietnam dong (about 2 million USD) and is expected to be completed by the year 2011.

The product of this project will be included a database of all standardized geographical names presenting in the National topographic maps and a geographical names represented in the Vietnamese world map. By completing this project, Vietnam will be able to set up a National gazetteer and geographical name database. This database should be orientated as a component of the Vietnam National Spatial Database Infrastructure in future.

Up to now this project has got some following progresses:

For work group of standardization of geographical names representing in the Vietnamese world map, there has been issued a regulation and guideline for transferring geographical names from their original names into Vietnamese. This was a complicated process, because since long time ago foreign names in Vietnam have been transcript and used by different ways, therefore they are not homogeneous, many of them are not correct, one name may have several different transcriptions and all of them are accepted in common use, for example: Moscow can be used as: Matxcova or Mạc Tu Khoa, United State of America can be used as Hoa Kỳ or Mỹ, Australia can be Ôxtrâylia or Úc etc. The foreign names have came to common use in Vietnam rather long time ago so it is not easy to make the people get out of their habit of use. Therefore the way of standardization of foreign geographical names in Vietnam was chosen by setting up a suitable regulation and guideline for transferring foreign names in to Vietnamese in a such way which is more closer to their original pronunciations and characters, issuing a gazetteer of foreign names, publishing a new Vietnamese world map for public use which making people acquaintance with the new standardized names step by step. For creating regulation and guideline,

DOSM has invited specialists from different institutions and organizations of Vietnam such as Vietnam Linguistic Association, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam Association of Geodesy, Cartography and Remote Sensing, Hanoi National University and specialists from some main linguistic groups of the world seating together and work out the content of regulation and guideline. There was a long discussion on this issue, but it has come to agreement between specialists at the end, and these regulation and guideline have been completed and approved by Minister of Ministry of Natural resources and Environment of Vietnam on February 2007. Base on these regulation and guideline there were about 6000 foreign geographical names presented in the Vietnamese world map have been transferred into Vietnamese from their original names and they are now at the last step of checking for approval.

In such way a gazetteer of geographical names representing in the Vietnamese world map of scale 1:30,000,000 is going to complete and it will be issued for public use by the end of this year.

For the group of standardization of geographical names presenting in the National topographical maps, there has been completed and issued as well a general regulations for standardization of all Vietnam geographical names representing in the National topographic maps scale 1:25,000 and now a guideline for taking concrete steps of name standardization is going complete.

For creating this regulations, DOSM has also invited specialists from number of institutions of Vietnam to participate in a so called “Committee for creating general regulations on standardization of Vietnam Geographical Names for cartographic mapping”. A big discussions among specialists were especially occurred on the method of standardizing names of minority and ethnic groups, as Vietnam has 54 ethnic and minority groups and many of them have no their own writing. The specialists were at the end agreed on that, the general regulations should consisted all general rules, an additional guideline with more concrete acting details should be issued for resolving all type of the names during their standardization.

The mentioned above regulations has been completed and approved by Minister of MONRE on March 2007. For creating guideline there are some pilot work on standardizing names are carrying out now for some typical areas of Vietnam and this guideline expected to be completed by October this year.

The standardization of geographical names presenting in the National topographic map afterward will be carried out step by step for several territorial parts of the country according to their linguistic and ethnic characters.

The entire gazetteer of geographical names will be constructed in compliance with technical requirements of an oriented for the future database of geographical names of Vietnam, which will meet requirements of National information standards and conform to the rules and principles of standardization of geographical names of UNGEGN.

The gazetteer will be available in electronic form and will be available at the websites of the DOSM and MONRE.

As Vietnam is a member of the of Asia South East and Pacific South West Division of UNGEGN, after the Eight Conference, according to the decision of Divisional meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, October 2003, DOSM has carried out updating a portion of Vietnam on regional map and creating a concise gazetteer of geographical names of Vietnam consisted of 201 main geographical names. The product has been completed and submitted to the Division in 2004.

**Conclusion:**

Standardization of geographical names in Vietnam has got a new progress and challenge since the Eight United Nation Conference in 2002. As Vietnam has not many experiences in standardization of geographical names, a support to Vietnam from UNGEGN and other countries in toponymic training and creating geographical name database for coming period would be very much appreciated.