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Item 16 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Writing Systems: romanization

Romanization

Submitted by France**

Summary***

Following the twenty-third session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the Convenor of the Working Group on Romanization Systems held meetings in Tallinn, Estonia, in October 2006. At that time, he proposed that the French-speaking Division should be represented in the Working Group, and the Division officially agreed to join the Group.

The logical use of precise place names, made possible by romanization systems, is an essential element of effective global communication.

At the request of the United States expert, France made a study of romanization in North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the French expert highlighted the romanization system used in French for surnames and geographical names in dictionaries, atlases and maps: such a system has long existed for basic Cyrillic and the particular letters of the alphabets of various Slavic languages. He also provided information on French pronunciation of the languages belonging to the Baltic and Finno-Ugric group.

Aware of the need to officialize the romanization systems originated by France, the National Commission on Toponymy of France (CNT) is setting up a working group on romanization, adopting a working method based on the subject headings under which the resolutions of the Group of Experts relating to romanization by language are grouped, with a view to publishing a list of official documents on the website www.toponymie.gouv.fr.

* E/CONF.98/1.

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*** The full text of the paper is being issued in French only as document E/CONF.98/115/Add.1.

