



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

15 June 2007

Original: English

Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

New York, 21 - 30 August 2007

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 Eighth Conference.**

**Standardization of geographical names in the Russian Federation
between 2003 and 2007**

Submitted by the Russian Federation**

* E/CONF.98/1

** Prepared by the Federal Agency for Geodesy and Cartography (Roscartography).

STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION BETWEEN 2003 – 2007

Summary

In the time period passed since the 8th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, some changes occurred that affected the work in the domain of geographical names. In 2004, the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography was abolished. The Ministry of Transportation and the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography formed as its department was entrusted with the functions to determine the state policy in the standardization and legislative control of geographical names.

In 2004, the Interdepartment Commission on Geographical Names was abolished. In February 2005, the Ministry of Transportation formed the Commission on Geographical Names in view of a necessity to provide a coordination of the work carried by the state executive authorities in naming of geographical objects.

The Report provides a current status of the draft law devoted to the changes to be made in the Federal Law “On the names of geographical objects”. The law under development is a result of ten years application of the law in naming and renaming of geographical objects, their standardization, use, registration and storage.

Some practical results achieved in the national standardization of geographical names are enlisted (examination of proposals on naming and renaming of geographical objects, preparation of administrative division references, publication of the reference “World states and territories”, responses given to the queries pertaining to geographical names issue, etc.)

Since 2002, the State Catalogue of Geographical names has been developed. Currently, the database includes more than 180,000 geographical names of 66 subjects of the Russian Federation. By 2010 the database embracing all the geographical objects put on the map at scale 1:100,000 shall be completed. The work is started to provide the data stored in the Catalogue to the users. It is planned to provide the users with the databases for required regions together with the software that will allow the user to search required information and later to make the database accessible via the Internet.

The State Catalogue of Geographical Names is used to monitor official changes of the names of geographical objects on the territory of the Russian Federation. This information is available to a wide range of users as an electronic bulletin updated on the half yearly basis.

Geographical names were rendered in Russian for the purposes of publishing new maps and atlases.

National authorities responsible for the standardization of geographical names

In recent years, some structural changes were made in the state authorities that in its turn affected the national standardization of geographical names. The Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography determined as a special federal authority in the field of naming, renaming, standardization, use, registration and storage of geographical names was abolished by the Decree of the President on March 9, 2004.

The Ministry of Transportation is entrusted with the functions to determine the state policy in the standardization and legislative control of geographical names, while the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography formed within the Ministry of Transportation shall provide the services in naming of geographical objects.

Within the scope of its competence the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography is responsible for:

- inventory, standardization, use, registration, verification and storage of the names of geographical objects;
- examination of proposals submitted by the authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation on naming and renaming of geographical objects;
- development and maintenance of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names;
- international cooperation on the issues related to geographical names.

The Interdepartment Commission on Geographical Names that since 1999 had coordinated naming of geographical objects, was abolished by the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation in April 2004. In February 2005, the Ministry of Transportation formed the Commission on Geographical Names in view of a necessity to provide a coordination of the executive state bodies activity in naming of geographical objects. The status of the Commission and its membership was determined and approved. The Commission is made up of the representatives of the federal executive authorities and scientific institutes. The Commission holds regular meetings to consider proposals on naming or renaming which require a coordination between the authorities in charge. It also investigates drafts of normative and methodic documents related to the standardization and use of geographical names, considers a work of the Russian delegations in the international meetings devoted to geographical names issues. Decisions of the Commission within its scope of responsibility are mandatory for the executive authorities participating in the Commission. The Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography provides an administrative and technical support of the Commission's work.

Status of legislative and normative base for naming of geographical objects

Legal foundations for naming, standardization, use, registration, verification and storage of geographical names are laid in the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993), the Federal Law "On the names of geographical objects"

(December 1997) and in the Federal Decrees adopted by the Government to provide the Law's observation.

Ten years during which the Federal Law "On the names of geographical objects" and the Resolutions adopted on its basis were implemented, revealed a need to revise some clauses of the Law. On the instructions of the Ministry of Transportation, the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography is preparing a draft of the Federal Law "On the changes in the Federal law "On the names of geographical objects". The main objective of the law under development is to specify and detail some notions used in the Federal Law "On the names of geographical objects", its term of reference, some norms needed to cope with the issues pertaining to the standardization of geographical names. Detailization of some notions will allow making them unambiguous and thus provide condition for taking more qualitative solutions in naming and renaming of geographical objects. The term of reference of the law in force shall be detailed to comply it with the clauses of the Law of local authorities in the Russian Federation. There is also a need to specify the urban objects which do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Law "On the names of geographical objects" (e.g., administrative regions, districts, streets, squares, theaters, museums, factories, underground stations, bridges, and so on.)

The law draft and accompanying documentation is subject to the procedure of agreeing adopted in the Russian Federation in course of which the law draft is detailed and changed in accordance with the comments received. Then the law draft will be submitted to the State Duma (Parliament.)

In time between 2003 and 2007, the following normative and legislative documents were revised and updated: "Guidelines for naming and renaming of the geographical objects in the Russian Federation", "Instructions for rendering of the Moldavian geographical names in Russian", "General guidelines for recording and standardization of geographical names". It is planned to develop a normative document to regulate a procedure of the standardization of geographical names."

Practical aspect of the national standardization of geographical names

Between 2003 and 2007, the following practical work was carried out:

1. Proposals on naming and renaming of geographical objects in the Russian Federation, continental shelf, exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation as well as the objects discovered or mapped by the Russian explorers in the open sea or Antarctica were examined.
2. Drafts of new gazetteers and references of geographical names were agreed, queries received from the federal and local executive authorities, agencies, institutions, organizations and private persons were responded.
3. The State Catalogue of Geographical Names was developed and maintained.
4. The authorities and organizations engaged in mapping were provided with standardized geographical names and appropriate information.

Here are some results achieved during the time between 2003 and 2007:

- Annually, about 800 proposals on naming and renaming of populated places, administrative units, ports, mountains, bays and so on were examined.
- References of administrative divisions of the Republic of Karelia, Udmurt Republic, Republic of Saha (Yakutia), Vologodskaya oblast', Kirovskaya oblast', Kostromskaya oblast', Leningradskaya oblast', Lipetskaya oblast', Moskovskaya oblast', Rostovskaya oblast' and others prepared by the governments of the Russian Federation subjects and submitted to the Ministry of Transportation and Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography were examined and agreed.
- The reference "World states and territories" was published. It is an information and reference source for the specialists engaged in mapping and also for a wide community of map users. The reference comprises brief data about territorial and administrative subjects of the World (states and territories of specific status), short and full names of the states and territories, geographical location of states and territories, and their status, state capitals and centers of territories, political status of territories and the ways their borders are shown on map.
- Annually, more than 300 queries on geographical names received from different agencies, organizations and private persons were responded.
- Since 2002 the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography develops the State Catalogue of Geographical Names. The work is carried out in accordance with the Federal Law "On the names of geographical objects" and subsequent decrees adopted by the Government of the Russian Federation. The State Catalogue is a constantly updateable database of geographical names. Its aim is to meet the needs of the federal authorities, local authorities, institutes, organizations and private persons in standardized geographical names. A great progress was made in populating the Catalogue's database. Currently the database includes more than 180,000 geographical names of 66 subjects of the Russian Federation. By 2010 the database embracing all the geographical objects put on the map at scale 1:100,000 shall be completed. The work is started to provide the data stored in the Catalogue to the users. A draft of the document is prepared to determine information services that will be available to the users. A volume of these services will be growing as the database is being populated with geographical names. It is planned to provide the users with the databases for required regions together with the software that will allow the user to search required information and later to make the database accessible via the Internet.
- The State Catalogue of Geographical Names is used to monitor official changes of the names of geographical objects on the territory of the Russian Federation. This information is available to a wide range of users as an electronic bulletin updated on the half yearly basis. The bulletin will also be uploaded on the site of the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography.
- The geographical names of the Russian Federation and foreign countries were rendered in Russian for development of new maps and atlases.
- An electronic version of Supplement № 3 to the Information Bulletin "Changes in the geographical names in the CIS countries" was completed. The

Supplement was spread at the 6th meeting of the Working Group of the Interstate Council for Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Remote Control of the Earth of the CIS state-members.

Major atlases and maps issued

Over the time passed since the 8th UN Conference on the Standardization of geographical names the following major atlases and maps were published in the Russian Federation:

- National Atlas of Russia, volume 1 and 2 (volume 3 and 4 is almost completed);
- Geographical Atlas of Russia;
- Autoatlas of Russia, CIS and Baltic Countries;
- Wall geographical maps of federal districts of the Russian Federation;
- Series of maps and atlases of the subjects of the Russian Federation (geographical, road, administrative, etc.)
- Maps and atlases for schools.

International cooperation in the standardization of geographical names

In the time period passed since the 8th UN Conference on the Standardization of geographical names, Russia participated in:

- meetings of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names;
- meetings of the Working Group on Geographical Names of the Interstate Council for Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Remote Control of Earth of the CIS state-members.

The Russian specialists attended:

- 23rd session of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (Vienna, 2006);
- 5th (2004), 6th (2005) and 7th (2006) meetings of the Division of Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names;
- 9th (Riga, 2005). 10th (Vienna, 2006) and 11th meetings of the Baltic Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names;
- 4th (2004), 5th (2005) and 6th (2006) meetings of the Working Group on Geographical Names of the Interstate Council for Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Remote Control of Earth of the CIS states-members.