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REGIONAL COOPERATION AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Divisional report of the United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names for Asia South-East and Pacific
South-West Division

Paper submitted by New Zealand**

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** Prepared by the Department of Survey and Land Information, Wellington, New Zealand.

1. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This report covers the activities of the Division during the period between the Twelfth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific in February 1991, and February 1994.

2. DIVISIONAL MEETINGS

- 2.1 Taking advantage of the presence of many members at the Twelfth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific held in Bangkok in February 1991, the division held an ad hoc meeting at which member countries elected New Zealand as the Divisional Representative and Chairman of the Asia, South-East and Pacific, South-West Division.

As incoming chairman I was very pleased to acknowledge the previous efforts of the division and particularly those of the past chairman of eight years, Mr Abdul Majid Bin Mohamed of Malaysia. The division recognises the important role that standardisation of geographic names has to play in supporting the global communications infrastructure. In the field of cartography and information technology place names are a necessary layer in land information systems. It is therefore essential that the standardisation and systemisation of geographical names parallel other developments in the fields of land and geographical information.

- 2.2 During the period under review one further divisional meeting was held. The Sixth Divisional Meeting was hosted by New Zealand in Wellington, New Zealand on 29-30 September 1992. Experts from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Thailand attended. Other member countries of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore and Viet Nam were unable to send delegates to this meeting. However, as is always the case, the Divisional Chairman welcomes contributions by correspondence when member countries are unable to send delegates to divisional meetings.

- 2.2.1 Invitations were extended to Pacific Island nations to attend the Sixth Divisional Meeting as observers, with the view to encouraging them to take up membership within the division. The Republic of Palau was to attend as an observer but unfortunately had to withdraw. The Solomon Islands sent a report of their activities and apologies for their non-attendance as an observer.

2.2.2 In addition to the country reports and reports on divisional projects a number of other papers were presented on toponymic matters. These included:

- Applying the Donor Principle to Map Names: A practical experience from New Zealand
- Maori and Pacific Place Names (Oral presentation only)
- Aboriginal Place Names
- The Gazetteer of New Zealand Place Names
- The Australian Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names in the Pacific and Indian Oceans

2.2.3 In reporting to the Sixth Divisional Meeting on my attendance at the Sixth United Nations Conference on Standardisation of Geographical Names held in New York in August 1992 I was pleased to note the interest in the "Nations of the World" map produced by New Zealand using the donor names principle.

2.2.4 Mr Vern O'Brien of Australia has proposed changing the name of the division to "Austronesia". Other suggestions were also put forward, and members were asked to give the proposals consideration. The matter will be discussed again at the next divisional meeting.

2.2.5 Mr O'Brien also explained a proposal by Australia to prepare a regional bibliography listing works and articles relating to toponymy, etymology and place names. Member countries supported the proposal in principle. Australia will coordinate and compile the bibliography and members are encouraged to supply individual country data.

3. PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY THE DIVISION

3.1 1:10,000,000 Divisional Place Names Map

3.1.1 At the Fifth Divisional Meeting held in Perth, Western Australia in August 1990, and in subsequent discussion with members, agreement was reached that the scale of the new map of the Asia, South-East and Pacific, South-West Division incorporating New Zealand and Australia should be 1:10,000,000. The new map is being produced by the Department of Survey and Land Information, New Zealand. The 1:10,000,000 Divisional Place Names map will supersede the 1:7,000,000 physical and political division maps previously produced by Malaysia.

3.1.2 New Zealand will produce the map in a computer mapping environment rather than by conventional methods. The methodology, timetable and other related matters were discussed by members at the Sixth Divisional Meeting in Wellington. High quality inkjet proofs of the map will be made available to members at the next divisional meeting and copies will also be distributed to member countries unable to attend.

3.1.3 To date, place names information has been received from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The remaining member countries are being urged to contribute similar information.

3.2 Gazetteers

The Second Edition of the Concise Gazetteer and the First Edition of the Regional Gazetteer are the current editions of these publications. Updated gazetteers will be produced as a by-product of the computer-generated place names map.

3.3 Toponymic Training

At the Sixth Divisional Meeting members discussed the matter of future toponymic training and endorsed the proposal by New Zealand to include a short toponymic session in the proposed United Nations Regional Cartographic Technical Meeting for Asia and the Pacific. Members noted the need to build on the good work that has been done in the past on toponymic training, and in particular that there was a need for another toponymic workshop similar to that held in Indonesia in 1989.

3.4 Regional Atlas of Language Distribution

At the Fifth Divisional Meeting held in Perth in 1990 Indonesia had suggested that the Division publish an atlas of language distribution. Gathering information on all the Australian Aboriginal languages was identified as being one of the more difficult aspects of such a project. Australia reported that the project being prepared on aboriginal languages by the Australian National University would not be published until the end of 1993. Dr Atchison of Australia is to make contact with the Australian National University to establish how progress could be made on the divisional project.

4. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT DIVISIONAL MEETING

The Seventh Divisional Meeting of the UNGEGN Asia, South-East and Pacific, South-West Division is scheduled to be held on 7-8 May 1994 in Beijing, China, immediately prior to the Thirteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific which is also to be held in Beijing.
