
United Nations
Group of Experts on
Geographical Names

Working Paper
No.65

Eighteenth Session
Geneva, 12-23 August 1996

Item 5
of the Provisional Agenda

REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

Report of the Republic of Cyprus

Submitted by Cyprus

Eighteenth Session of the UNGEGN
Geneva 12 - 23 August 1996.

The island of Cyprus remains a source of fascination to the representatives of a wide range of interests from beyond its shores. It is apparent that the problem which beset the people of Cyprus, are largely a consequence of the island's over powerful appeal. The strategic significance of the island's location, in the north eastern corner of the East Mediterranean Basin, at the meeting point of three continents - Europe, Asia and Africa - has attracted successive people who have regarded possession of it as a step towards the solution of their own diverse problems and their achievements of their ambitions.

The history of civilization of Cyprus seems to be appeared for the first time in the 6th Millennium B.C. during the neolithic period which lasted three millennia and followed by the bronze age which lasted until 1500 B.C. In the 13th century B.C. The Achaean Greeks settled in Cyprus and they introduced the Greek language which has been preserved to this day. At the end of the 4th century B.C., Cyprus became part of the Kingdom of Alexander the Great and during the first century B.C. became a province of the Roman Empire and remained as such until the 4th century A.D. This marked the beginning of the byzantine period, which lasted until the 12th century A.D. when during the Crusades, King Richard Coeur de Lion conquered the island, but he, soon after handed it over to Guy Lusignan who established a French Dynasty which lasted until the 15th century. In 1489 Cyprus was taken over by the Republic of Venice and in 1571 it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Cyprus came under British

rule in 1878 and remained so until 1960, when it gained its independence.

Cyprus was declared an independent sovereign Republic on 16th August, 1960 and in September ~~of~~^f the same year it became a member of the United Nations, in 1961 a member of the Council of Europe, the Common Wealth and the Non - Aligned Movement. Thus the Republic of Cyprus and its Government have been consistently recognized by all international Organizations and in all international fora.

The history of the cartography of Cyprus covers a period of more than 2,500 years. In his monumental work under the title Geografiki Ifigisis, dating back to 160 A.D. Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria mentioned that he mapped Cyprus. However, Ptolemy's map of Cyprus was in use until it was replaced by western marine cartographers. Consequently, the geographical names of Cyprus have an old history from a cartographic as well as a cultural point of view. These Geographical names reflect, as research students and scholars can witness, the historical and social conditions which prevailed in the long history of the island ~~it~~ ha^ve a wealth of toponyms some of which originated in antiquity and survived to present day unaltered.

Nevertheless, Turkey through its occupying forces and its organs proceeds to ~~the~~ change and rename, in an arbitrary way, all the internationally accepted official toponyms, that have

survived through centuries, in the area of ^NNorth Cyprus, currently illegally occupied by the Turkish invasion forces and in the free area which is under the Government control. Such changes and rena/mings amount to unauthorised interference in the affairs of an independent state and illegal action against Cyprus, which is null and void as it is contrary to International law. Since such changes of Geographical names do not confirm with ^TThe resolutions of the conferences on the Standardization of Geographical names ~~it~~ should not be recognized, but censured and rejected.

"Lack of standardized names has caused difficulty in the work of map makers, statisticians ^Cen^Sus takers, and many others, leading to undue and harmful delay and mistakes. The effects of confusion in geographical names is felt not only by geographers and those concerned with national and international affairs, since geographical names constitute one of the required elements of identification in administrative and legal documents, but also by individuals, since people all over the world now have occasion to refer to, identify, or even go to a place".

The task for the collection, standardization and romanization of the geographical names of Cyprus was entrusted to the "Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names" which was set up in April 1977 by decision No. 15769 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus and constitutes the only competent national geographical names

authority. The toponymies were collected mainly from the cadastral plans, other official map series from the Department of Lands and Surveys, the Official Cartographic Authority of the Republic of Cyprus and from other sources. After field checking of the most of them, ^{they} were processed by a glossologist of the Cyprus Scientific Research Center.

The Cyprus Government following the resolution of the Fifth Conference, concerning the approval of ELOT 743 romanization system, by virtue of a Council of Ministers decision published in the Official Gazette of the Republic No. 2375 dated 7th January, 1989 has sanctioned the obligatory use of the approved Romanization System of the Greek alphabet.

Cyprus takes part in all the conferences and sessions of the United Nations on Geographical Names and is a member of three Linguistic Divisions:

- (a) The Romano - Hellenic Division
- (b) The East/Central and South - East Europe Division.
- and (c) The Asia South - West Division (other than Arabic).

PROGRESS MADE IN STANDARDIZATION

Complying with the resolutions of the United Nations Conferences for the Standardization of Geographical Names, Cyprus has kept abreast with the subject since the first Geneva Conference in 1967.

In 1982, 2000 main Geographical Names of the island had been standardized and transliterated to form the "CONCISE GAZETTEER OF CYPRUS" which was submitted and approved by the 4th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

In 1987 "A COMPLETE GAZETTEER OF CYPRUS" was prepared which contains about 67,000 names submitted and approved by the 5th United Nations Conference ^{for} the standardization of Geographical Names. It is worth noting that the Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names has, since 1987, been issuing on request free of charge the complete Gazetteer of Cyprus Volume I, to all official Geographical Names Authorities, Cartographic Organizations, Universities and other relevant agencies.

Cyprus has adopted the system successfully by applying it on all new and revised editions of Maps and Charts, compiled and published by the Department of Lands & Surveys, the National Mapping Agency. Besides, the system has been introduced to other activities and services namely the postal and communication

services, the Local Authorities the Department of Antiquities, the Cyprus Tourism Organization and others.

FUTURE PROGRAM.

The Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names has scheduled ~~for~~ the following works to be done.

- i) Compilation of Volume II of the "Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus". Further research and field work is needed to complement the whole project by adding the geographical names which do not constitute the official names but exists and are inherent in the culture of the Cypriots because they are used by people in their everyday life.
- ii) A new and improved edition of the "Concise Gazetteer".
- iii) A booklet - Guide, containing directions for update application of the ELOT 743 Greek Alphabet System and guide line for the naming of cartographical and other geographical features.
- iv) Compilations of a glossary under the title "Local

Generic Terms in Cyprus Geographical Names".

- v) Names of Countries and Capitals in the Greek Language.
- vi) An Index of all the Antiquities and Ancient Monuments, with the assistance of the relevant Department.
- vii) Glossary of Sea and undersea terms.
- viii) Shortly we shall be in the position to supply free of charge the COMPLETE GAZETTEER in digital form accompanied by software conversion package.
- ix) Revision and new editions of maps.