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Agenda item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda *

**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress
made in the standardization of geographical names**

Report of the Philippines

Submitted by Philippines **

The Philippines is an archipelago composed of the three main island groups of Luzon, Visayan and Mindanao, with a total land area of 300,000 km². The central Government resides in the capital city of Manila and the national capital region of Metro Manila. The local government units comprise the provinces, cities, municipalities and the smallest political unit called the barangay. Overall, there are 17 regions consisting of 81 provinces, 145 cities and 1,489 municipalities. There is a total of 42,045 barangays in the country.

The first effort to standardize geographical names in the Philippines dates back to 1900 with the establishment of the Philippine Committee on Geographical Names, the main function of which was to resolve issues on geographical names. However, it was discontinued in 1973 owing to government reorganization.

Since that time, there has been no geographical naming authority in the Philippines, although natural and human-made features already have their own local names. Those geographical names are being validated by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, as the central mapping agency of the Government, during the conduct of field verification activities and as part of its regular activity of updating the topographic maps of the country at the scales of 1:50,000 and 1:10,000. Data on geographical names are first gathered at the provincial, city and municipal planning offices of local government units and later validated on the ground. All geographical names are stored and integrated into the central digital topographic database of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority.

Presently, the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority is updating the Philippine gazetteer based on topographic maps on a scale of 1:50,000. The previous gazetteer was published in 1989 based on topographic maps on a scale of 1:250,000.

From 19 to 24 March 2018, the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority sponsored the first United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names regional training on toponymy, including marine toponymy, in Manila, which included participants from the Asia South-East Division and national government offices. Presentations were given by six experts from the Group of Experts and

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** Submitted by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), Republic of the Philippines.

four local experts. Topics included naming principles, terminology, standardization of geographical names, name collecting techniques, processing of geographical names, database creation, specific aspects of marine and underwater naming and toponyms as a cultural heritage. A mock exercise of a “geographic names board” meeting was also undertaken.

The National Mapping and Resource Information Authority is proposing the revival of the Philippine Committee on Geographical Names in order to avoid confusion as to the official names of features to be indicated on topographic maps, which also include maritime and underwater features for nautical charts. Its members should come from other government agencies, especially the local government units, because of their distinct familiarity and knowledge of place names in their respective localities.

**Country Report of the
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**

on the

**7th Divisional Meeting
United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
UN Headquarters, New York
29 April 2019**

I. INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) of the Republic of the Philippines, provides updates on geographical names activities of the Philippines since the 6th UNGEGN Asia South East Divisional Meeting held in Manila last 26 March 2018.

II. PAST ACTIVITIES

- A. In 2016, The Philippines' Task Group on Inventory of Islands already accomplished island inventory of seventeen (17) provinces but still needs comprehensive ground validation in cooperation with local government units (LGUs). The Task Group explored issues and recommendations on islands inventory subject to comprehensive field validation. Such issues include ambiguity of landform definitions (e.g. island, isle, islet and rocks) and inconsistent island names indicated in the old maps compared to what is being used in the local area.
- B. In topographic map updating at scale 1:50,000 and 1: 250,000, integration of geographical names in data gathering was initiated. Aside from feature identification, survey field work also included interviews and sound recordings of geographical names. This was being started in target topographic maps of select areas.

III. CURRENT ACTIVITIES

A. UNGEGN Programs

1. On August 7-18, 2017, the Philippines attended the 30th UNGEGN Session and the 11th Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in UN Headquarters, New York, USA and presented the Divisional Report .
2. On August 9, 2017, the Philippines attended the 5th UNGEGN-ASE Division Meeting held in UN Headquarters, New York.
3. On March 19-24, 2018, the Philippines hosted the 1st Regional Training Program in Toponymy including Marine Toponymy held in Manila, Philippines.
4. On March 26, 2018, the Philippines hosted the 6th UNGEGN-ASE Division Meeting held in Manila, Philippines.

B. National Programs

1. Philippine Standard Geographic Code (PSGC)

The Philippine Standard Geographic Code (PSGC) is a systematic coding scheme of geographic areas of the Philippines. It classifies local government units (LGUs) according to well-established geographical-political subdivisions of the country such as administrative region, province, city/municipal and barangay. PSGC is established through the Technical Working Group on Geographic Classification (TWG-GC) composed of key agencies in the Philippines.

The latest update of PSGC on the number of Local Government Units (LGUs) as of September 2018 is as follows:

	As of September 2017	As of September 2018
No. of Regions	17	17
No. of Provinces	81	81
No. of Cities	145	145
No. of Municipalities	1,489	1,489
No. of Barangays	42,036	42,045

Nine (9) barangays were newly created.

2. Philippine Islands Inventory Project

In 2017, the Philippine Islands Inventory Project Phase I was fully implemented but was concentrated only on one archipelagic province.

Very high resolution imageries were acquired for all islands in the Philippines and remote sensing technologies will be applied to initially classify land forms. Intensive ground validation techniques and data gathering for geographical names will also be conducted.

In 2018, Phase II of the project was started. It covered fifty eight (58) coastal provinces. At the end of the project, the Philippines will have an inventory of islands with verified geographical names. This will update the 1941 Census Atlas of the Philippines and the 1989 Philippine Gazetteer.

3. 1st Regional Training Program in Toponymy including Marine Toponymy

The Philippines hosted the 1st UNGEGN Regional Training Program in Toponymy including Marine Toponymy. It was held in Dusit Thani Hotel in Makati City, Philippines on 19-24 March 2018. It was organized to support capacity building for members of the UNGEGN-ASE Division in collaboration with United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA). The objective of the course is to increase knowledge and understanding on the standardization of geographical names.

There were six (6) UNGEGN Experts served as trainers and four (4) local experts who shared their knowledge on the overview of the Philippine geography, culture, language, and mapping activities.

The training was attended by a total of fifty-four (54) participants from country members: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam

IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

A. Updating of 1989 Philippine Gazetteer

The 1989 Philippine Gazetteer edition contains approximately 61,000 name entries for places and features in the country based on 1:250,000 scale topographic map series. The Philippines aims to update and validate the said gazetteer by utilizing the updated 1:50,000 topographic maps as a data source. Geographic names reflected in the 1:50,000 topographic maps will be stored in a Geographic Names Database. Thus, the Database will facilitate the updating of the 1989 Gazetteer.

B. Topographic Map Generalization from scale 1:10,000 to 1:50,000

The Unified Mapping Project (UMP) was implemented in 2013 with the aim was to generate large scale topographic maps of scale 1:10,000 covering the whole country until 2020. This will serve as official base map for all thematic mapping activities of the government as prime reference for detailed planning and project development. To ensure maximum utilization on the output of this project, a generalization process shall be implemented in order to avoid duplication of related topographic mapping programs and activities. Relative to this project, the integration of geographic names layer to existing 1:50,000 geodatabase that will give substantial additional information for the updating of gazetteer.

C. Reactivation of Philippine Committee on Geographical Names

The task of establishing a standard geographical name for the Philippines has been the responsibility of the Philippine Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) since 1900s. Its function consisted mainly of resolving issues on geographical names. However, in 1973, it was deactivated when a major revamp of the executive branch of the Philippine government was implemented. Since then, there is no official committee assigned to oversee the standardization of geographic names of the country although some agencies continue the standardization of geographic names. Hence, the Philippines intends to reactivate the PCGN to strengthen and harmonize the standardization of geographic names in the country.

