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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

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

**Report by the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Submitted by the Republic of Azerbaijan \*\*

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**Summary:**

The report summarizes the work done by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of standardization of the geographical names since its last report presented to the Group of Experts. It particularly outlines the major developments in the field of legislation. The report also highlights the progress in finalization of national transliteration rules and tables, which is of utmost importance for translation of national geographical names into the English and Russian languages. The report also outlines the approach of Azerbaijan in terms of digitalization of geographical data in light of increased use of geographic data and toponyms. In this regard, the report informs that geographic data, including the names of 4589 settlements have been placed in the open web sources to facilitate their use by third parties while preparing maps reflecting the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The document also highlights the challenge stemming from the use of inaccurate and falsified geographic names, and in this regard, points out the necessity for all stakeholders, first and foremost the UN and its agencies to refrain from using such falsified names in accordance with the relevant recommendations reflected in resolutions of UN Conferences on Standardization of Geographical Names.

**Improvement of the legal framework for the standardization of geographical names**

Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 30, 2002 “On the state language in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was adopted. According to Article 10.2 of the Law, the assignment of geographical names of Azerbaijan in foreign languages is determined in accordance with the pronunciation of the Azerbaijani language and the rules of international spelling of geographical names.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 18, 2007 "On the names of geographical objects" was adopted. According to the law, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan was designated as the competent national authority for registration of the names of geographical objects, and tasked to ensure uniform and stable use of the names of geographical objects located in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to preserve them. The said Ministry was also identified as the state body responsible for the creation of a state catalogue, preparation and publication of maps and atlases of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

By Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 6, 2008 the "Regulations for registration of names of geographical objects, requirements for dictionaries and reference books of names of geographical objects, rules for creating and maintaining a state catalogue of names of geographical objects" were approved.

The “Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Names” was translated into Azerbaijani in 2016, and trainings were conducted in the Republic of Azerbaijan to organize work on the standardization of geographical names based on international experience and the application of the standardization procedure.

Based on the requirements of these standards, “Geodesy and Cartography” LLC under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources prepared "Manual for creating a state catalogue of names of geographical objects" and "Manual on the rules for registering and accounting for names of geographical objects".

By resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 16 December 2020 "Rules for transliteration of the names of geographical objects of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Azerbaijani alphabet into the Russian alphabet" and the "Rules for transliteration of the names of geographical objects of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Azerbaijani alphabet into English" were approved.

## **Standardization of geographical names, the creation of a state catalogue and the sharing of information**

The collection of geographical names was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the approved instructions. In this context, maps of scales 1: 50,000 and 1: 100,000, various literature, research, information from central executive authorities, etc. were used. The database was created by systematic analysis of information obtained from sources. This information was transferred to an automated information system.

To date, 31,459 geographical names for 86 administrative districts and cities of the country have been collected in the database and checked by editors. Geographical names to be included in the state catalogue of geographical objects will be reflected in 3 languages - Azerbaijani, English and Russian. The names of the settlements are being clarified by the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences after transliteration from Azerbaijani into English and Russian. The completion of the state catalogue of geographic objects of the Republic of Azerbaijan is expected in 2022.

At the same time, the names of 4589 settlements of the Republic of Azerbaijan were transliterated into English and Russian and posted on an open information portal in all 3 languages. The portal also include geographic names of 11 types, such as districts, towns, roads, railways, lakes, mountains etc. Portal Link: <https://www.opendata.az/en/services?catId=92>. API interfaces were also developed enabling the re-use of the data by outside map makers.

The list of names of 4589 settlements as standardized by the competent national authority of the Republic of Azerbaijan can be reached through the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QdHRUsaEGryG11Y2P4w2o51AUdGNb6jb/view?usp=sharing>.

The list reflects the standardized names of the settlements as defined by the Second UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names (Vol. II, 1972, p. 52). Thus, those names have the official sanction of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, which is the legally constituted entity responsible for standardization of geographic names in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

### **Inaccurate and falsified geographic names**

The ungrounded territorial claims by Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan is accompanied by massive falsification of standardized geographic names of Azerbaijan, in particular with regard to those geographic objects located in the territories of Azerbaijan that were under military occupation of Armenia. It was identified by the State Agency for Geodesy and Cartography that at least 125 such geographic names have been falsified by Armenia (the list is attached herewith as Annex 1).

Such a deliberate falsification of geographic names standardized by the relevant state body of Azerbaijan represent a gross violation of letter and spirit of UNGEGN resolutions and recommendations reflected therein. It is particularly disturbing that some of these falsified names have also been used by UN agencies and specialized bodies in contravention to recommendations developed by the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Thus, it is of particular relevance here to recall Resolution 16 adopted by the Third Conference held in 1977, which recommends, *inter alia*, that “*any changes made by other authorities in the names standardized by the competent national geographical names authority should not be recognized by the United Nations*”.

Furthermore, Resolution 9 of the Sixth Conference of 1993 specifically discouraged unauthorized changing of geographical names that have already been established by a legally constituted entity and are nationally recognized.

In light of the above-mentioned, any name used with regard to the settlement located in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan other than the one officially adopted by the competent state body should be resolutely rejected.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The coordination and leadership role of the “Geodesy and Cartography” LLC under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources continues to be a very important in bringing the national practice in the area of standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Azerbaijan. At the same time, in view of technological developments, as well as increased use of maps and other geographical products in information-communication technologies, such as mobile applications, the State Agency will continue to liaise with other state institutions in order to ensure that geographic data related to the Republic of Azerbaijan is up to date and fit to the latest technological requirements.

The list of geographical names in the Republic of Azerbaijan as an annex to this report is presented as the only official reference point for the geographical names of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Republic of Azerbaijan strongly calls on all stakeholders, such as map makers and other users of geographic data, including those operating for the UN and its institutions to refrain from using falsified names of the geographic objects located in the territory of Azerbaijan and standardized by the competent national authority.

The Group of Experts is invited to take into account the report. It is also recommended for the Group to consider the ways of strengthening implementation of recommendations adopted by previous UN Conferences related to non-recognition of unauthorized changes made to geographic names standardized by competent authorities of UN Member-States.