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English

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

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Item 4(a) of the provisional agenda *

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

**Iran's measures regarding the Standardization of
Geographical Names between 2021-23**

Submitted by Iran**

Summary

The Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographic Names (ICSGN) is an inter-organizational body that pursues its goals on the one hand by formulating regulations and guidelines and on the other hand by monitoring and following up on their implementation.

In order to improve its legal position, this committee, with the approval of the government, added five bodies related to geographical names to the structure of the committee. With this change, the representatives of all organizations related to geographical names are involved in the decisions and directly raise the progress and problems of their respective bodies regarding the standardization of geographic names in the committee. In this regard, in the recent governmental rule, the mandatory of the committee's decisions regarding the standardization of geographical names for other organizations has been emphasized.

On the other hand, in order to execute the decisions taken and implement the standardization of geographic names in the country, the committee has implemented various measures directly or through its working groups. In the field of promoting standardized names, the development of Iran's national geographical names database by providing standard name service, creating a national database of country divisions and publishing it on the web, and providing standardized geographical names and their transcription in the national topographic database has been implemented. Regarding the preservation of historical geographical names as an intangible human heritage, meetings and briefings with the trustees were followed up and implemented by presenting documents and reports virtually and in person. In terms of education, the basics of standardization, including transcription instructions for the Persian language, were held for those involved in the provinces.

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Actions taken to strengthen the legal status of the Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names (ICSGN)

The ICSGN was formed in 2000 as an inter-organizational institution with the membership of nine organizations related to geographical names. This committee followed up on the standardization of geographical names in the country by providing suggestions or recommendations to other organizations while the implementation of its decisions and approvals was not binding for other organizations, until in 2022 with the approval of the government and to strengthen the legal status of this institution, representatives of five organizations that were directly related to the promotion and publication of geographical names were added to the committee members. In this regard, in the recent government decree, the committee's decisions regarding the standardization of geographical names became binding for other organizations.

One of the most important sources of geographical names publication is the results of the country's general census, which is published by the "Statistics Center of Iran". With the approval of the ICSGN, it was decided to gather the transcription of geographical names in the censuses and register them in the country's statistical database. The publication of census information among users should also be accompanied by transcription so as not to cause differences.

Publishers and authors of books, magazines, maps, and similar products, who publish their products in printed or digital form, may also cause confusion and differences in geographical names. With the approval of the ICSGN, it was decided that the "Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance", which is the supervising authority for these products, should develop guidelines and implementation methods to oblige authors and researchers to use reliable and standard references.

Measures to Implement the Standardization of Geographical Names

Supervision of the implementation of laws, guidelines, and decisions of the ICSGN is often followed and conducted through six working groups. In the following, the measures taken according to the result of the activities of the "Website and National Database of Geographical Names", "Publications and Education" and "Historical Names" working groups are outlined.

Promote the use of the Iranian Geographical Names Database (IGNDB)

Persian writing and standard transcription of more than 135,000 geographical names are registered in the IGNDB. This information was collected in the process of preparing 1:25,000 series map and stored in the National Topography Database. Access to this reference database is provided for users, especially for map producers.

On the other hand, the IGNDB service has been established to provide updated information, reduce costs, and eliminate errors.

Completion and correction of IGNDB

Collecting and registering geographical names of large-scale urban maps (roads and places of cities) is one of the objectives of the ICSGN, which has not yet been achieved. Gathering the mentioned information with inquiries from provincial authorities is on the agenda of this committee. In addition, the guidelines for city maps were revised to standardize the names on future maps.

In the IGNDB, similar geographical names in spelling and pronunciation have been registered differently in some cases. Correcting these defects is one of the ongoing actions.

Holding the Iranian Geographical Names Transcription System training course

The Iranian Geographical Names Transcription System training course is held in person or online at the request of the related organizations. In this regard, to familiarize and bring provincial authorities to cooperation in the process of collecting information on urban geographical names, the transcription system training course was held virtually for 31 provinces.

Preservation of Historical Geographical Names

One of the most important tasks of the ICSGN is to explain the importance of preserving geographical names, especially historical names, as intangible human heritage. For this purpose, the professors, researchers, and experts in this field who have proposed the name changes were invited to express their views in face-to-face or virtual meetings and to be aware of the sensitivity and importance of not changing historical names.

To review the state of Standardization of Geographical Names and related processes within the member bodies of the ICSGN

At several meetings, each member organization and ministry explained the processes associated with geographical names in their respective institutions and subordinate bodies. At these meetings, suggestions are made and what causes confusion and geographical name differences will be addressed.

Developing the software to compile and update geographical names

By connecting to the NTDB, this software provides the possibility of recording and editing graphic and descriptive information of features, including Persian writing, transcription, and the audio playback of the name online. If there is no access to the Internet, it is possible to collect information offline. This software can be easily used in field operations by installing it on portable devices, including smartphones and similar devices.