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**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**

Report of the Republic of Cape Verde

Submitted by Cape Verde **

Summary

     This report describes the initiatives of the Republic of Cape Verde, made by the Authority on Geographic Names, National Commission of Toponymy (CNT), through the coordination of the National Institute for Territorial Management (INGT), in the management and standardization of geographical names of Cape Verde, including the whole history, taking into account that it is the first time a report of this nature has been prepared. INGT has carried out several toponymy projects, since the survey of approximately 10,000 toponyms, on the Republic of Cape Verde Military Chart, prepared in 1969, at scale 1:25,000. From the survey carried out, it was found that the toponyms are closely related to the social and historical causes of the country and are of diverse origins. At this moment, the National Commission of Toponymy, the entity with authority in the matter, has been doing standardization work, correcting misplaced or mistranslated names, or those with pejorative content, and disseminating qualitative toponymy data and information, through a digital platform, providing standardized geographic information to domestic and foreign consumers. It is also carrying out, through a specialized team, the elaboration of the dictionary with about 1,300 generic names and is also researching the origins and evolution of the names of Cape Verde's administrative division. INGT is integrated in the Portuguese Speaking Countries Division team, so that it can cooperate internationally in the implementation of the UNGEGN strategic plan to facilitate the standardization of geographical names

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* GEGN.2/2023/1
** Prepared by INGT - National Institute for Territorial Management, CNT - National Commission of Toponymy

1. Background Information or historical sketch

The process of toponymic research was born with the settlement of the Cape Verde islands in 1462, and was nurtured by curious administrative agents, professors, priests, and national and foreign researchers.

Most of the toponymy names are on the 1969 Military Chart, produced at the 1:25,000 scale. Place names in Cape Verde are a mixture of African, European and other influences, which makes the toponymy of the archipelago very rich and diverse. Many place names originate in the local creole languages, which are a mixture of Portuguese and various African languages. Other names reflect the influence of other European languages, such as French, English, and Dutch, which have had some degree of influence on the archipelago's history.

The settlement extended to the islands of Maio and Boa Vista. In some cases, the only objective was cattle raising, in a free grazing regime. The toponyms associated with cattle breeding, such as "Curral", "Morro", "Chã" still abound today as paleo-toponyms witnesses. Almost all toponyms linked to slaves have disappeared: "Escravoeiros" (slave markets), "Heito" (slave dwelling = only one toponym remains, in Paul, Santo Antão). There still exist toponyms connected to agricultural production, to commerce products and even to building materials: "Pedreira", "Forno de cal", "Salineiro", "Galinheiro", Algodoeiro", "Várzea", "Chão Bom", even the name of the land owners' dwelling: Estância", "Passo" (for Paço). These examples will be matter of study that appear as "indispensable instrument for the correct geo-referencing and assembly of the land management system, necessary for the fulfillment of the activities foreseen for the economic development of the country".

In addition, Cape Verde's toponymy also reflects the archipelago's geographical and natural features, such as place names that indicate the presence of water, like Ribeira Grande and Ribeira Seca, or place names that reflect geographical features, like mountains, valleys, and plains.

The place names also reflect the colonial and slave history of the archipelago, as is the case with the streets and neighborhoods named after Portuguese historical figures, or place names that reflect the presence of places where slaves were bought and sold.

In Cape Verde, for social and historical reasons, the names of the tops are of various origins. Names of people (anthroponyms) in some islets and villages; names of plants (biotoponyms) especially in places where agricultural activity dominated or dominates; names of animals (zootoponyms) in natural accidents, islets and villages; Geomorphological names (geoponyms), usually accompanied by another name in uninhabited places and in some settlements; and also, the most problematic toponyms, originated from names altered by corruptions, semantic modifications and misinterpretations.

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The process of toponymic research was born with the settlement, and was nurtured by curious administrative agents, professors, priests, and national and foreign researchers. Certain Cape Verdean peculiarities no longer seem strange to us, because they were assimilated without discussion, but they still cause concern to foreigners.

The regulation of toponymy at the national and municipal level was created through decree-law no. 5/2012 of February 28 and creates the National Commission of Toponymy (CNT), the national authority on toponymy, functioning as a multidisciplinary body and of an advisory nature to the member of the Government responsible for geodesy, cartography and cadastre, assumed the responsibilities regarding the standardization, compilation or attribution of toponyms to places, sites and infrastructures of national or international dimension, which fall under its competence,

while obliging, stimulating and supporting the municipalities to give a new impetus to the massive implementation of municipal toponymy and police numbering.

Since the names used in the 1969 military charter were translated into Portuguese, there were many mistranslations and misplaced names, in many cases with pejorative meaning. However, with the passage of time, certain Cape Verdean peculiarities no longer seem strange to us because they have been assimilated without discussion, but they still cause concern to foreigners.

2. Discussion of goals and national programs

2.1 Treatment and systematization of Geographical names

2.2 Validation of the assignment and/or change of Geographical Names

The decree-law establishes that toponymy must meet certain criteria, such as the historical, cultural, or geographic relevance of the toponym, the preservation of the collective memory, and the nonduplication of street names or public spaces. Therefore, all toponymy proposals are submitted to the National Commission of Toponymy for analysis and opinion.

The Government, through the Ministries, presents the proposal for the attribution and or alteration of toponyms of national scope, duly justified, for approval by the CNT, through the National Institute for Territorial Management.

The CNT, after assessing the proposal, will issue an opinion. In case of a non-favorable opinion, the proposal is returned to the applicant, justifying the reasons for the return. The applicant will review the returned proposal to be resubmitted for further consideration. Having the approval of the CNT, the proposal is sent to the member of the Government responsible for geodesy, cartography and land registry, for homologation.

The granting of a geographical name implies the prior placement, by the applicant, of the respective toponymy plaque. In case of change of the geographical name, a reference to the previous designation may be maintained on the respective toponymy plaque. According to the provisions of Article 9, regarding Publicity, after the Toponym is assigned, the Ministry of Infrastructures, Spatial Planning and Housing (MIOTH), through the National Institute for Land Management (INGT), orders the publication of notices in the places of style and other public places of large population affluence, in the Municipal Bulletin and in local newspapers.

2.3 Research into the Origin and Evolution of Geographical Names

One of the competences of the National Commission of Toponymy is to investigate and divulge, at the moment INGT is investigating the origin and evolution of the geographical names of the Administrative Division of Cape Verde, as well as the elaboration of a glossary of the generic names used in the Military Chart of 1969.

2.4 Ordinary and Extraordinary Meeting of the National Committee of Toponymy (CNT)

Under the terms of the ordinance No. 5/2025, defines the composition of the National Commission of Toponymy (CNT) of Cape Verde is the National authority responsible for

managing and standardizing the geographical names of the country. The commission is composed of 12 (twelve) representatives with rights and duties and impediments in the internal operating regulations published through the ordinance in 2020 and meets ordinarily twice a year and extraordinarily whenever justified.

The CNT aims to ensure the uniformity and correct spelling of place names in Cape Verde, to avoid confusion and facilitate communication between people. The commission is also responsible for preserving the traditional and historical names of places, respecting the country's culture and history.

Under the terms of no. 13, of DL no. 05/2012, the Commission's main functions are:

- Issue opinions on the creation, modification and suppression of toponyms;

- Validate the work of surveying, standardizing and compiling toponyms;

- Approve the proposed geographical names;

- Regularize the standardization of the writing of the different place-names;

- Promote the dissemination of and research on Cape Verdean toponymy.
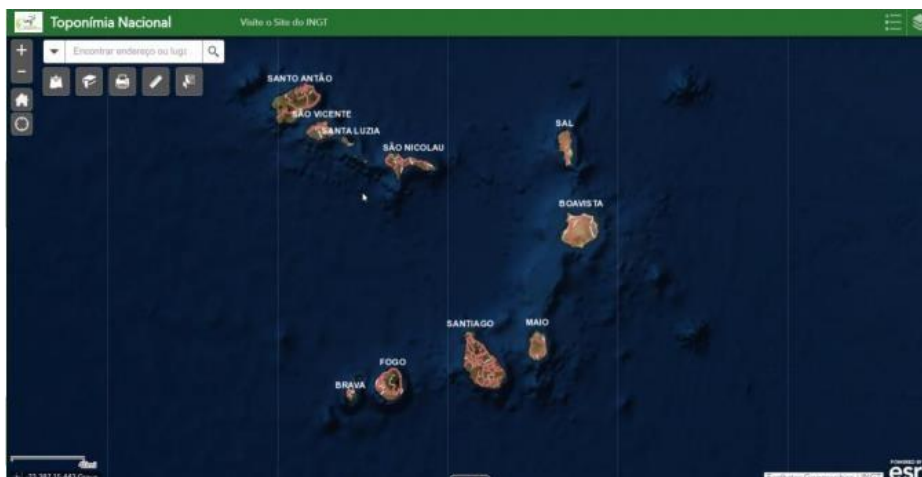
2.5 Dissemination of toponymy data and information

 To this end, the CNT maintains an up-to-date database of the country's official geographical names, which is used on maps, official documents and other publications. The commission also evaluates and approves the new names proposed for places or that have changed their names, and resolves any conflicts between different names for the same place.

In addition, the CNT works closely with other entities, such as the National Institute for Territorial Management (INGT), to ensure the accuracy and quality of the country's geographic data. The commission also promotes activities to raise awareness about the importance of geographical names and their preservation.

INGT will register the new place name in the Cape Verde Toponymy Database, which can be consulted   through   the   link:
https://ingt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d2a7c59f23c34d3ab
f77f55ebad82de2

3. Discussion of problems, solutions and achievements during the reporing period

3.1 Generic names abbreviated in various ways.

Generic names are often written and abbreviated in different ways, an example follows below where "Our Lady" is abbreviated differently in the same letter.
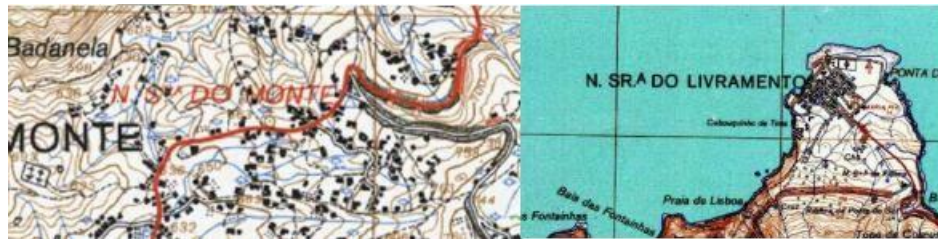

3.2 Misrepresentation in the translation of toponyms from Portuguese to Creole and vice-versa

Misrepresentation or mistranslation of geographical names in Cape Verde is a problem that has occurred throughout the country's history, especially during the colonial period when place names were often changed to Portuguese or European origin names. Cape Verde is a country with a rich mix of cultures and languages, including Portuguese and Cape Verdean Creole. Some Portuguese words and geographical names were poorly absorbed by the Creoles, resulting in different pronunciations or spellings or even the creation of new words.

Below are two examples of mistranslation, of the word "Mampatraz", a species of plant that is prevalent in that stream, and which, due to the similarity of sound, was translated as "Mão para traz".
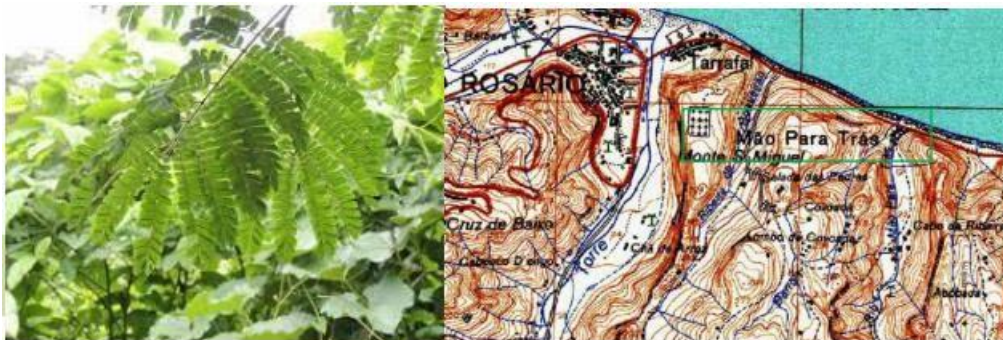
There are several examples of this type, already identified, and the National Commission of Toponymy is correcting these translation problems case by case. Another paradigmatic exampleis the translation of "Lin d'corvo", which in Creole means "Linha do Corvo", and which was translated into Portuguese as "Lindo Corvo".
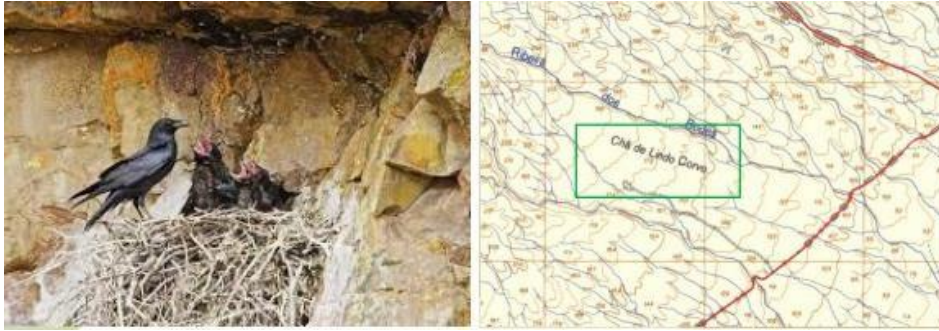
Another example of mistranslated names that give a pejorative sense is the case of the tip of "cagod", in São Nicolau when, in fact, it refers to a turtle (green turtle) that feeds in that place.

Or "Curralete", which comes from the Portuguese meaning "small holes", but which was translated into Creole as "escurrelete", which means "to take milk" or "to milk".

3.3 Geographic Names in Creole and Portuguese (Bilingualism)

There are several toponyms in Creole and Portuguese, and according to the CNT's decision they should remain in both languages, for example the case of Brava Island written in Portuguese and "Djabraba" in Creole. However, there are toponyms that exist only in Portuguese, so they should remain in Portuguese. And there are toponyms that are in Portuguese or other African languages and should remain in these languages without their respective translation. For example, Djongotó, Gongon, Godim etc. Most toponyms have a corresponding one in the mother tongue. Which one to adopt? For example, Stancha or Estância, Lompelado or Lombo Pelado etc. This is because often when a translation is made it loses all meaning.

3.4 Foreignness

Although the official language of Cape Verde is Portuguese, the country has a rich and diverse history that includes influences from other cultures and languages that have never been translated into either Portuguese or Creole.

4. Update on actions taken to support the implementation of the strategic plan and programme of work, 2021-2029, with particular attetion paid to strategy 2, on relationships, links and conections

Since the approval of the Strategic Plan and Work Program 2021-2029, INGT has taken several actions to support its implementation, with special attention to strategy 2 on relationships, linkages and connections. One of these actions includes integration into the Portuguese Language Division working group.

This integration aims to strengthen collaboration and cooperation among Portuguese-speaking countries and improve communication among stakeholders within the organization. With the addition of a representative of the Portuguese Language Division to the working group, it is expected that there will be greater inclusion of Portuguese-speaking countries in discussions and decisions related to the implementation of the strategic plan.

In addition, the organization is working to establish partnerships with other international and regional and national organizations such as universities, as well as with civil society, to promote cooperation and collaboration in various areas, including the promotion of the Portuguese language and the preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Toponymy in Cape Verde is an expression of the country's history and culture, reflecting the diversity of its people and its evolution over time. From the names of islands, cities and towns, to place names and streets, Cape Verdean toponymy is a valuable source of information for understanding Cape Verde's geography, culture and history. It is interesting to note that Cape Verdean toponymy has roots in several languages and cultures including Portuguese, Cape Verdean Creole, French, English and Arabic.

Many place and street names originate from historical personalities, events or geographical features, as well as local legends and traditions. However, toponymy in Cape Verde can also be a reflection of the tensions and conflicts that have characterized the country's history, as is the case of some names that were renamed after the country's independence in 1975 to honor leaders of the national liberation struggle.

Heritage importance, because it is the cultural patrimony of a country, toponymy must be considered national heritage. Every country long to highlight its national values: one feels proud of the name of the country, the state, the municipality of the parish. These toponyms, the historical product of conquests and colonization, particularize their inhabitants in the vicinity of the world.

- **Social importance**, toponyms can have an essential affective meaning for the inhabitants of a community and thus an outsider cannot fully understand it. For the inhabitants of a given locality, it is inappropriate to change names used in honor of prominent people in local history, in memory of historical facts and everyday life. Toponymy is of varying importance to the development of the country.

- **Linguistic importance**, one of the main foundations of toponymy is linked to the etymological explanation of toponyms and in that sense, it is closely linked to Linguistics.

In fact, toponymy is a linguistic phenomenon applied to geographical phenomena. Man, by his speech, designates and differentiates each of the geographical and cultural phenomena around him. The linguist, by studying ancient and historical geographical names can reach important conclusions by obtaining geographical and aboriginal names and with their consequent etymological analysis provide history with valuable data for reconstructing the past.

- **Legal significance:** imprecise geographical names on public and private property can lead to legal problems. If the boundaries of a property are not supported by a clear and firm toponymic basis, it is in a difficult situation to solve.

- **It is politico-administrative important**, since it allows us to fix the references of the limits of a municipality, district, state, and even international limits.

The cadastral policy of tax collection is based on toponymy references, since toponyms allow public and private properties to be located, differentiated, and precisely demarcated.

- **Importance Geographic location addresses**, the need to know the location is of extreme importance, in that knowing the names of localities, street names and the police number, one will be able to know the correct location of a building, through the addresses, for the various institutions that work with home deliveries. In conclusion, toponymy in Cape Verde is an important aspect, economy, culture and history of the country, which deserves to be preserved and studied.

In summary, by understanding the origin and meaning of place names, we can have a better understanding of Cape Verde's cultural diversity and historical richness and boost the country's economy with the growing wave of online shopping.

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