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**National and international standardization of geographical  
names: names collection, office treatment, national  
authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and  
international cooperation**

**Naming process of new provinces in Papua Region, Indonesia**

Submitted by Indonesia \*\*

**Summary:**

Four new provinces were established in the Papua region of Indonesia in 2022, as the result of a proliferation process affecting the Papua and West Papua provinces. The four new provinces are Papua Selatan (South Papua), Papua Tengah (Central Papua), Papua Pegunungan (Mountains Papua) and Papua Barat Daya (South-West Papua). The proliferation is the result of the aspiration of the locals to provide equitable development across the Papua region. The naming process of the new administrative areas in Papua Region involved several rounds of coordination with related stakeholders and local governments. The naming of the new administrative areas in Papua was determined by the geographical location or features of each province. The names of South Papua, Central Papua and Southwest Papua are based on geographical location, while the name of Papua Pegunungan reflects the geographical features of the area. The report will explain the process of naming new administrative areas in accordance with the existing principles and mechanism for standardizing geographical names.

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\* \* GEGN.2/2023/1

\*\* \*\* Prepared by Safrizal Za of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Indonesia.

## **Naming process of new provinces in Papua Region, Indonesia**

### **Introduction**

Indonesia as an archipelagic state has divided the governance into several administrative regions. According to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the administrative regions of the Indonesian government consist of provinces, districts/cities, sub-districts, villages, and hamlets. The arrangement of administrative regions through the process of division or merging of local governments has long been practiced by various countries to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government administration. The amalgamation of regions is practiced in European countries to increase efficiency and competitiveness in the global market competition. Meanwhile, the amalgamation of regions is more popularly practiced in African, Latin American, South Asian, and Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. In these countries, the division of regions aims to address development disparities, alleviate poverty and electoral political arrangements, and even mitigate the impacts of ethnic conflicts and separatist movements.

### **The formation of new provinces in Papua Region**

Papua is the easternmost province of Indonesia, located in the western part of the island of New Guinea or West New Guinea. Papua is also often referred to as West Papua because Papua can refer to the entire island of New Guinea. During the Dutch colonial era, this area was called Dutch New Guinea. From 1969 to 1973, Papua Province was known as Irian Barat. Its name was later changed to Irian Jaya by Soeharto (the second President of Indonesia) when inaugurating the Freeport copper and gold mine. The word Irian stands for Ikut Republik Indonesia Anti-Netherland, meaning "Following the Republic of Indonesia Anti-Netherlands". The name Irian Jaya remained officially used until 2002. The name Irian Jaya Province was officially changed to Papua Province in accordance with Law No. 21 of 2001 on Special Autonomy for Papua. The word Papua itself comes from the Malay language, which means curly hair, a description that refers to the physical appearance of the indigenous tribes in Papua.

In 2004, the Indonesian government divided Papua Province into two provinces. The eastern part retained the name Papua, while the western part became West Papua Province. The division of the Papua region was carried out to catch up with development, increase government efficiency, calm the hearts and minds of the Papuan people, and strengthen the legitimacy of the state in Papua.

In 2022, four laws were enacted concerning the formation of new provinces in Papua, namely Law Number 14 of 2022 on the Formation of *Papua Selatan* (South Papua) Province, Law Number 15 of 2022 on the Formation of *Papua Tengah* (Central Papua) Province, Law Number 16 of 2022 on the Formation of *Papua Pegunungan* (Mountains Papua) Province, and Law Number 29 of 2022 on the Formation of *Papua Barat Daya* (Southwest Papua) Province. There was a division in the Papua region, in the provinces of Papua and West Papua. Papua was divided into three provinces, making a total of four provinces: Papua, South Papua, Central Papua, and Mountains Papua. Meanwhile, West Papua was divided into two provinces, West Papua and Southwest Papua. This division was the result of the aspirations of the people of Papua to improve their welfare, maintain security and tranquility, and facilitate services to the people of Papua.

In dividing the four provinces in Papua, there were several coordination processes with stakeholders and related local governments. The administrative regions of the new provinces in Papua were named based on their location and geographical conditions. The names of South Papua Province, Central Papua Province, and Southwest Papua Province were based on their geographical location. In contrast, the name Mountain Papua Province was based on the topographical condition of the region as mountainous terrain areas. The naming of each administrative region was done according to rules, principles, and mechanisms for naming the region, involving relevant stakeholders and the community. The administrative region is a part of the geographical features created by humans. In addition to the name, each administrative region is also given a code. The provision of a code for the administrative region is intended to maintain order in the administrative region, given the many identical or similar

names of administrative regions. The code also makes it easier to identify the position and status of the administrative region.

### **Central Papua Province**

The selection of Nabire as the capital city of Central Papua is not without reason. At least there are several considerations that the central government took into account in choosing Nabire as the capital of the Central Papua Province.

Nabire is located in the heart of Papua, precisely in the middle between coastal Papua and mountainous Papua. Due to its central location, Nabire is easily accessible by seven districts from various directions. It is very strategic and complete. Most indigenous Papuans (OAP) are in Nabire, allowing them to build Papua with migrants in developing Central Papua.

Nabire has historical significance as the oldest district among the other nine districts/cities in Papua. Nabire was the oldest capital city when the Irian Jaya Province still had nine districts/cities, namely Sorong, Fak-Fak, Manokwari, Paniai with Nabire as the capital city, Biak Numfor, Yapen Waropen, Jayapura, Jayawijaya, and Merauke.

Nabire has Cendrawasih Bay, which is potentially a maritime traffic and tourism destination in East Indonesia besides Raja Ampat. Based on the story from the Hegure tribe, the name Nabire comes from the word "Inambre," which means a coastal area covered with palm trees. Influenced by communication with immigrant tribes, the term "Inambre" gradually changed into Nabire.

In terms of governance, the name Nabire is an abbreviation of the words "*Nyaman, Aman, Bersih, Indah, Ramah, and Elok*" (Comfortable, Safe, Clean, Beautiful, Friendly, and Lovely) which contains the hope for the involvement of all layers of society to realize it. Geographically, the Nabire district is located between 134°35' - 136°33' East Longitude and 2°25' - 3°56' South Latitude. The area of the Nabire district is approximately 12,075 km<sup>2</sup>, with a coastline of 473 km. According to the 2022 Nabire District in Figures, the Nabire district consists of 15 districts with 72 definitive villages, 9 urban villages, and 8 preparatory villages. Nabire District has the most villages, with 9 urban villages and 4 villages. Districts are the government at the sub-district level (equivalent to a sub-district) led by a district head.

### **South Papua Province**

South Papua Province Region comprises the south coast of Papua Island and the easternmost area, which is about directly with Papua New Guinea. Land use in South Papua is still dominated by tropical forests that are evenly distributed throughout the region, especially in the Boven Digoel and Asmat Regencies. In addition to forests, swamps, and mangrove forests are also found in the Mappi and Merauke Regencies. This condition aligns with the shape of the South Papua land, divided into coastal swamp plains, floodplains, and foothills. Generally, based on land use patterns, existing cultivation areas still need to be increased, with a value of less than 1% of the total area in all regencies.

### **Papua Pegunungan Province**

Geographically, the Papua Mountains Province (*Provinsi Papua Pegunungan*) is located in the central part of the northern region of the island of Papua, bordered to the north and the east by the Papua Province, to the south by the South Papua Province, and the west by the Central Papua Province. Regarding topographic position, the *Provinsi Papua Pegunungan* consists of mountains and is located in the highlands.

Wamena is the capital of *Provinsi Papua Pegunungan* and is located in the central part of the province. The farthest distance between provinces from Wamena is Sorong City, which is 924 km away, followed by the medium distance to Merauke City in Papua South Province, which is 516 km away.

Meanwhile, the closest distance from Papua Mountains Province is Jayapura City in Papua Province, which is 256 km away.

### **Papua Barat Daya Province**

Papua Barat Daya is located at the northwest end of the Doberai Peninsula or the Bird's Head Peninsula. Located in the westernmost corner of the province, the Raja Ampat District's Regional Water Conservation Area is world-renowned for its marine biodiversity, including coral reefs, giant turtles, manta rays, and whale sharks, making it a diver's paradise. The Raja Ampat Islands consist of various islands, such as Batanta, Misool, Salawati, and Waigeo. The capital of Papua Barat Daya is Sorong, known for its production of fossil oil and gas and its complete harbor and airport, making it one of the most developed cities in Papua. Many ecosystems, such as tropical rainforests and mountains, are still well-preserved. The Tambrau Regency has declared its area a Conservation District to promote ecotourism, one of which is birdwatching as a destination.

### **Conclusion**

The division of Papua into multiple provinces was carried out to catch up with development, increase government efficiency, calm the hearts and minds of the Papuan people, and strengthen the legitimacy of the state in Papua. The division was also the result of the aspirations of the people of Papua to improve their welfare, maintain security and tranquility, and facilitate services to the people of Papua. The four new provinces were named based on their geographical location and physical characteristics. The government consulted with stakeholders and the community to determine the names.

### **Points for discussion**

The Group of Experts is invited to:

1. Take note of the naming process of the new administrative areas in Papua Region, which incorporates the usage of geographic location and topographical features in the names and express its view on the technical paper.