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

The Standardization of Geographical Names in Japan

Submitted by Japan **

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** Prepared by the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan

The Standardization of Geographical Names in Japan

In Japan, geographical names are collected, arranged, and standardized by relevant governmental agencies to promote their administrative activities. As a consequent, the standardization of geographical names is a well-coordinated effort involving various related organizations which all have clearly defined tasks.

A. The efforts made by these organizations for standardization

1. Standardization of geographical names of administrative districts

Municipalities are composed of small administrative districts called *cho* or *aza* in Japanese. The names of small administrative districts are regulated by law, and new names and their areas are published in public notification from local governments. Therefore, the areas, notations, and pronunciations of residential geographical names, as well as their names on maps, are standardized. The names are used in the Japanese address system.

2. Unification of geographical names of natural features

In the natural feature names, the name conventionally called by the local are shown on maps and chart. In 1960 the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names was established to standardize geographical names by the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (GSI) which compiles maps of land areas, and the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard which compiles maps of mostly marine areas. Since then, the Committee meets once or twice a year and about 25,000 geographical names had been determined to be used unified on maps and charts.

3. Standardization of geographical names of undersea features

Names of the undersea features that have been discovered or surveyed by Japan's maritime survey organizations, and those that have been used historically have been standardized by the Japanese Committee on Undersea Feature Names, which consists of academic experts and maritime survey institute staff, and is operated by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard, to be followed when used in nautical charts and publications. The names are deliberated with reference to "Standardization of Undersea Feature Names" originally developed through collaboration between the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) and the Working Group on Undersea and Maritime Features of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. As of March 2021, approximately 1,600 standardized names have been assigned to undersea features.

4. Adoption of Antarctic geographical names

With the exception of geographical features found in the region south of 60 degrees S that have either been named by other countries or used internationally, the topographical features discovered by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expeditions (JARE) and points of major geodetic or observational interest are tentatively named based on the "Code of Antarctic Geographical Naming (enacted by

Headquarters of JARE)”. These tentative names are submitted by the Antarctic Place-Names Committee of Japan to Headquarters of JARE, which decides on the official names. As of March 2021, about 350 names had been officially approved and registered.

B. National Geographical Names Gazetteer

The Government of Japan is planning to revise “Gazetteer of Japan” in accordance with the resolutions of the 1st United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1967. The new edition of “Gazetteer of Japan” will be published on the web in 2021. This gazetteer contains geographical names updated since 2007 from 1:1,000,000 scale maps prepared by the GSI, as well as 1:1,000,000 scale bathymetric charts and 1:3,500,000 scale international charts prepared by the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of the Japan Coast Guard. Furthermore, the names of remote islands and undersea feature names approved by SCUFN will be also added to the gazetteer, and as a result, it will be composed of more than four thousand geographical names.