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Report of governments on the situation in their countries

Situation and Progress Made on the Standardisation of Geographical Names in Cameroon Since the 2019 Session

Submitted by Cameroon **

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RESUME

Le rapport national du Cameroun présente des informations sur les activités liées à la promotion des noms géographiques menées depuis la session de 2019 du Groupe d'experts des Nations Unies pour les noms géographiques. Les activités fortement impactées par la pandémie de la Covid 19 se réduisent à une timide poursuite des travaux de production d'une nouvelle carte topographique à l'INC et la valorisation par une publication des travaux du Symposium de néotoponymie de Niamey.

ABSTRACT

This Cameroon national report gives informations on activities related to the promotion of geographical names carried out since the 2019 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The activities strongly impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic are reduced to a timid continuation of work on the new topographic map at NIC and the promotion through a publication of a paper presented at the Niamey Neotponymy Symposium

Previous reports have attempted to provide a fairly broad overview of the situation of the standardization of geographical names in Cameroon as well as progress made in this field in recent decades. The present one, due to strong external constraints, will be limited to the essentials. Indeed, Cameroon is suffering with the same acuteness, the pangs of the health crisis related to the Covid 19 pandemic which is shaking the whole world. This situation severely limited the activities of this pioneer State in Central Africa in terms of toponymy. Nevertheless, two activities deserve attention:

- the timid resumption of the production of a new topographic map at NIC,
- Cameroon's contribution to the promotion of some articles presented at the Niamey Neotoponymy Symposium.

The timid resumption of the production of a new topographic map at NIC

Some three years ago, the National Institute of Cartography embarked on the production of the new topographic map at a scale of 1: 25,000, based on a topographic database at 1 / 10,000. After a breathtaking start, the production of this new map came to an abrupt halt due to both a technical problem and the outbreak of Covid 19. On a technical level, the database from the "localities file" used to write this map was incomplete. It was therefore necessary to correct it by placing particular emphasis on the collection of the names of all the places in the localities, the so-called places ... in order to densify the toponymic information on the new topographic maps and the derived thematic maps. A new topographical and toponymic mission in the Far North and North regions took place in this direction in 2019. In the meantime, the pandemic broke out, which has definitely stopped everything. An attempt to resume work has been scheduled for the end of 2020, but once again the execution seems for the moment compromised.

Cameroon's contribution to the promotion of papers presented at the Niamey Neotoponymy Symposium

As part of the promotion of some papers presented to the symposium held in Niamey in September 2018 on the theme "Naming places in Africa social, political and cultural issues: For an observatory of urban, geopolitical and digital neotoponymies", issue 53/2020 of the EchoGéo review has specially been devoted to toponymy issues. In addition to the editorial by Jean Louis Chaléard on "*Words to say it*", 11 articles were published in this issue, including that of Gaston Ndock Ndock on "*Catch-up town planning, popular territorial marking and odonymy conflicts in the city of Yaoundé*". In this 19 pages article, the author, who is a research professor at the geography department of ENS / University of Yaoundé 1, highlights the urban crisis experienced by the populations in the neighborhoods of Yaoundé and the popular responses provided in terms of urban odonymy

Beyond this valuable contribution for Cameroon, it is important to note that of the 11 articles presented, only three relate to the African continent. They are, in addition to the article by Ndock Ndock,

- Ghousmane Mohamed "*The Tuareg onomastic heritage at the gates of the Saharan desert*" (18 p.).
- Dorcas Zuvalinyenga "*We shall know a place by its names: co-existing place names in Bindura, Zimbabwe*" (19 p.).

If the concerns around toponymy are not a priority in Cameroon as in most African countries, the situation seems much more alarming today because of a health crisis superimposed on security and socio-political crises almost latent.

Although the health, security and socio-political challenges are currently omnipresent and monopolize all the attention of the public authorities, it is important to remember that unlike most African countries, Cameroon has, since 1968, through Decree No. 68 / DF / 314 of August 9, 1968 and in accordance with resolutions I / 4A (1967) and VIII / 6 (2002) of the 1st and 8th United Nations Conferences on the

Standardization of Geographical Names, created a national commission for Toponymy (CNT). This structure, which unfortunately never worked, has to be reactivated, as were its colleagues in Burkina Faso (2012) and Tunisia (2013). However, Cameroon's wealth of heritage, unique in its genre, its great intellectual potential, but above all the problems posed by the management of toponyms in an extremely multilingual context (more than 250 languages) militate in this direction.

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