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English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names****2023 session**

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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 standardization of  
geographical names****Report by the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Submitted by the Republic of Azerbaijan

## Summary \*\*

The report highlights the work done by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of standardization of the geographical names since its last report presented to the Group of Experts. It primarily outlines the major developments in the field of legislation. The report also highlights the progress in finalization of national transliteration rules and tables, which is of utmost importance for translation of national geographical names into English and Russian languages. It also covers state catalogue of geographic names approved by the relevant authorities of Azerbaijan. Geographical names that are included in the state catalogue of geographical objects are given in 3 languages - Azerbaijani, English and Russian. The electronic version of the state catalogue of geographic objects of the Republic of Azerbaijan is provided in the report as well.

Furthermore, the report outlines the approach of Azerbaijan in terms of digitalization of geographical data in light of increased use of geographic data and toponyms. In this regard, the report informs that geographic data, including the names of 4589 settlements have been placed in the open web sources to facilitate their use by third parties while preparing their maps reflecting the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

This report also outlines the names of new economic regions of Azerbaijan approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On new division of economic regions in the Republic of Azerbaijan” dated July 7, 2021. According to this Decree, the country is divided into 14 economic regions, the names thereof are mentioned in the report.

The document also highlights the challenge stemming from the use of inaccurate and falsified geographic names, and in this regard, points out to the necessity for all stakeholders, first and foremost the UN and its agencies to refrain from using such falsified names in accordance with the relevant recommendations reflected in resolutions of UN Conferences on Standardization of Geographical Names.

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\*\* Prepared by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan

### **Improvement of the legal framework for the standardization of geographical names**

Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the state language in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was adopted on dated September 30, 2002. According to Article 10.2 of the Law, the assignment of geographical names of Azerbaijan in foreign languages is determined in accordance with the pronunciation in Azerbaijani language and the rules of international spelling of geographical names.

According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the names of geographical objects" dated December 18, 2007, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan was designated as the competent national authority for registration of the names of geographical objects. It was tasked to ensure uniform and stable use of the names of geographical objects located in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to preserve them. The said Ministry was also identified as the state body responsible for the creation of a state catalogue, preparation and publication of maps and atlases of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

By Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 6, 2008 the "Regulations for registration of names of geographical objects, requirements for dictionaries and reference books of names of geographical objects, rules for creating and maintaining a state catalogue of names of geographical objects" were approved.

The “Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Names” was translated into Azerbaijani in 2016, and trainings were conducted in the Republic of Azerbaijan to organize work on the standardization of geographical names based on international experience and the application of the standardization procedure.

Based on the requirements of these standards, “Geodesy and Cartography” LLC under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources prepared "Manual for creating a state catalogue of names of geographical objects" and "Manual on the rules for registering and accounting for names of geographical objects".

By resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 16 December 2020 "Rules for transliteration of the names of geographical objects of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Azerbaijani alphabet into the Russian alphabet" and the "Rules for transliteration of the names of geographical objects of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Azerbaijani alphabet into English" were approved.

### **Standardization of geographical names, the creation of a state catalogue and the sharing of information**

The collection of geographical names was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the approved instructions. In this context, maps of scales 1: 50,000 and 1: 100,000, various literature, research, information from central executive authorities, etc. were used. The database was created by systematic analysis of information obtained from relevant sources. This information was transferred to an automated information system.

Out of 27,216 geographic names 13,707 were approved for 86 administrative districts and cities of the country. They have been collected from the database and checked by editors. Geographical names that are included in the state catalogue of geographical objects are given in 3 languages - Azerbaijani, English and Russian. The remaining names of the settlements and objects are being clarified by the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences after transliteration from Azerbaijani into English and Russian. The electronic version of the state catalogue of geographic objects of the Republic of Azerbaijan is available at the [Link](#).

At the same time, the names of 4589 settlements of the Republic of Azerbaijan were transliterated into English and Russian and posted on an open information portal in all 3 languages. The portal also includes geographic names of 11 types, such as districts, towns, roads, railways, lakes, mountains etc. Click for the portal [Link](#).

API interfaces were also developed enabling the re-use of the data by outside map makers.

The list of names of 4589 settlements as standardized by the competent national authority of the Republic of Azerbaijan can be reached through the [Link](#).

The list reflects the standardized names of the settlements as defined by the Second UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names (Vol. II, 1972, p. 52). Thus, those names have the official sanction of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, which is the legally constituted entity responsible for standardization of geographic names in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

According to the Decree by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On new division of economic regions in the Republic of Azerbaijan” dated July 7, 2021, the following division of economic regions was approved:

- 1) Baku Economic Region (Baku city);
- 2) Nakhchivan Economic Region (Nakhchivan, Babak, Julfa, Kangarli, Ordubad, Sadarak, Shahbuz and Sharur);
- 3) Absheron-Khizi Economic Region (Sumgayit, Absheron and Khizi);
- 4) Mountainous Shirvan Economic Region (Aghsu, Ismayilli, Gobustan and Shamakhi);
- 5) Ganja-Dashkasan Economic Region (Ganja and Naftalan, Dashkasan, Goranboy, Goygol and Samukh);
- 6) Garabagh Economic Region (Khankendi, Aghjabadi, Aghdam, Barda, Fuzuli, Khojali, Khojavand, Shusha and Tartar);
- 7) Gazakh-Tovuz Economic Region (Aghstafa, Gadabey, Gazakh, Shamkir and Tovuz);
- 8) Quba-Khacmaz Economic Region (Khachmaz, Guba, Gusar, Siyazan and Shabran);
- 9) Lankaran-Astara Economic Region (Astara, Jalilabad, Lerik, Lankaran, Masalli and Yardimli);
- 10) Central Aran Economic Region (Mingachevir city, Aghdash, Goychay, Kurdamir, Ujar, Yevlakh and Zardab);
- 11) Mil-Mugan Economic Region (Beylagan, Imishli, Saatli and Sabirabad);
- 12) Shaki-Zakhatala Economic Region (Balakan, Gakh, Gabala, Oghuz, Shaki and Zagatala);
- 13) Sargi Zangazur Economic Region (Jabrayil, Kalbajar, Gubadli, Lachin and Zangilan);
- 14) Sirvan-Salyan Economic Region (Shirvan city, Bilasuvar, Hajigabul, Neftchala and Salyan).

### **Inaccurate and falsified geographic names**

Regretfully, occupation of 20 per cent of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan by Armenia for nearly 30 years had catastrophic consequences for the country. Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan was accompanied by massive falsification of standardized geographic names of Azerbaijan in the territories that were under military occupation of Armenia as a mean of erasing the Azerbaijani traces in the occupied territories and securing their illegal annexation. The State Agency for Geodesy and Cartography identified that at least 125 of such geographic names were falsified by Armenia (the list is attached herewith as Annex 1).

Armenia did not only falsify the geographic names in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan, but also pursued systematic policy to destroy, pillage and misappropriate Azerbaijan’s historical and religious cultural heritage in those territories. More than 700 historical monuments, 22 museums, including 100000 museum exhibits, 927 libraries, 58 archeological sites, 26 fortresses and fortress wall and other objects of cultural heritage were destroyed, plundered or misappropriated by Armenia. This country also unlawfully renamed or changed the very historical nature of some places, settlements, objects and monuments endemic to the region by attempting to massively create an Armenian narrative for them.

In this regard, Armenia’s continued practice of falsification and misnaming of standardized geographic names and exploiting the UNGEGN, which has been established, among others, to counter such instances, for its malign purposes is unacceptable and must be resolutely rejected. The report of March 20, 2023, submitted by Armenia to the Group contains references to the settlements of Azerbaijan with fake names and include such references as “territories under its control” or “Azerbaijani-control

territories of Nagorno Karabakh”. This is another blatant manifestation of the continuation of the territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan.

It is necessary to remind Armenia and to the members of international community that there is no administrative or geographic unit in Azerbaijan called as “Nagorno Karabakh”, and every state and organization has to refer to the geographic names in the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan standardized by the relevant authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which can also be found in the attachment of this report.

In view of continued practice of falsifying and misnaming officially standardized geographic names of Azerbaijan, it should be reminded once more that this represents a gross violation of letter and spirit of UNGEGN resolutions and recommendations reflected therein. The administrative entities and the names assigned to them are the internal issue of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and any attempt of an unauthorized change of already-existing toponyms and geographical names is a blatant violation of the sovereignty of Azerbaijan.

It is exceptionally disturbing that some of these falsified names have also been used by UN agencies and specialized bodies in contravention to recommendations developed by the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

It is of particular relevance here to recall Resolution 16 adopted by the Third Conference held in 1977, which recommends, *inter alia*, that “*any changes made by other authorities in the names standardized by the competent national geographical names authority should not be recognized by the United Nations*”. Furthermore, Resolution 9 of the Sixth Conference of 1993 specifically discouraged unauthorized changing of geographical names that have already been established by a legally constituted entity and are nationally recognized.

In light of the above-mentioned, any name used with regard to the settlement located in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan other than the one officially adopted by the competent state body should be resolutely rejected.

In addition, Armenia’s systematic policy of eradication of the signs of ethnic Azerbaijanis once lived in nowadays Armenia also deserves particular attention. Armenia has pursued wanton destruction and misappropriation of the settlements and the historical objects and places of Azerbaijanis who had compactly lived in nowadays Armenia until their mass deportation. By destroying the settlements and historical sites, changing architectural features, and conducting “archaeological” excavations, Armenia pursued far-reaching targets of removing any sign of their Azerbaijani origins. Over 700 toponyms belonging to the Azerbaijanis who had lived for millennia in nowadays Armenia were changed and the names of many villages and settlements were renamed with the ultimate objective of wiping out any Azerbaijani traces by creating the false Armenian narrative. In fact, the geographical names used by Armenia with regard to the places where Azerbaijanis compactly lived for centuries have no historical basis and are not endemic to the region. Armenia did not limit itself only with name changing or total destruction, but also in some instances relocated Armenians in the territories where Azerbaijanis were expelled. Along with such destructive activities, Armenia has also promoted hatred and racism against Azerbaijanis at any level of Armenian society, as well as within its political establishment.

Since geographical names and toponyms constitute essential elements of cultural identity and it is essential to treat and preserve them accordingly. Systematic and wide-scale erasure, that Armenia has been pursuing for decades, does not align with the letter and spirit of resolutions adopted within the framework of the UNGEGN, which, among others, recognize that deliberate changing of geographical names could lead to the loss of cultural and historical heritage.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

The coordination and leadership role of the “Geodesy and Cartography” LLC under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources continues to be a very important in bringing the national practice in the area of standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Azerbaijan. At the same time, in view of technological developments, as well as increased use of maps and other geographical products in information-communication technologies, such as mobile applications, the State Agency will continue to liaise with other state institutions in order to ensure that geographic data related to the Republic of Azerbaijan is up to date and fits the latest technological requirements.

The list of geographical names in the Republic of Azerbaijan as an annex to this report is presented as the only official reference point for the geographical names of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Republic of Azerbaijan strongly calls on all stakeholders, such as map makers and other users of geographic data, including those operating for the UN and its institutions to refrain from using falsified names of the geographic objects located in the territory of Azerbaijan and standardized by the competent national authority.

The Group of Experts is invited to take into account the report. It is also recommended for the Group to consider the ways of strengthening implementation of recommendations adopted by previous UN Conferences related to non-recognition of unauthorized changes made to geographic names standardized by competent authorities of UN Member-States.