

3 May 2023

English

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

2023 session

New York, 1 – 5 May 2023

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda ^{1*}

**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.

^{1*} 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

As the largest archipelagic state constituting of 17.508 islands with multi-cultural societies, Indonesia has undergone numerous processes in establishing its many provinces. From only a few, we now have 38 provinces with the aim of expediting and enhancing sustainable development throughout all regions of Indonesia.

In 1950, Indonesia established Bali, Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi as new provinces. Subsequently, in 1956, we reorganized East Java into two provinces: East Java and Central Java. Furthermore, during the 1960s, several new provinces were established to promote greater development throughout Indonesia. This includes Papua, Maluku, and Riau.

Indonesia continues to carry out this approach to date in our endeavor to ensure development, enhance participation of the people, increase public services effectiveness, boost economic growth, and strengthen local cultural identities.

Taking into account the 1,500 ethnicities and more than 710 ethnic languages, providing names to geographical features has become a vital aspect since it also represents irreplaceable cultural values of vital significance to people's sense of well-being and belonging.

The formation of many new provinces in Indonesia renders it necessary to dedicate each of them with a unique geographical name that values the importance of the respective cultural identity. The names are interconnected with the development planning and aligned with the local culture, history, and traditions of the said region. By preserving the cultural significance of toponyms, Indonesia can uphold its unique identity and promote a sense of pride among its citizens.

The Formation of New Provinces in Papua

Papua, a province situated in the far east of Indonesia, occupies a unique position in the archipelagic nation. As the easternmost region, its geographical identity has evolved since Indonesia's independence in 1945 to better accommodate and represent the needs and aspirations of the people of Papua. The region was named "Dutch New Guinea" during the Dutch colonial era to "Irian Barat," then "Irian Jaya" during the Soeharto Government (the Second President of Indonesia). In 2001, through Law No. 21 of 2001 on Special Autonomy for Papua, the name officially changed to Papua Province.

This dynamic process of identity formation and adaptation is a testament to the rich cultural heritage and the dynamic nature of Papua, which has shaped its history and identity into a vibrant and distinct part of Indonesia.

In 2004, the Indonesian government established two provinces in-Papua, namely Papua and West Papua provinces. The eastern part retained the name Papua, while the western part became West Papua Province

In 2022, four laws were enacted concerning the formation of four 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 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 (*Papua Barat Daya*). This was carried out by the government to accommodate the aspirations of the people of Papua to further improve their welfare and facilitate services to the people of Papua.

The establishment of four new provinces in Papua, were carried out with close 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 man-made geographical features. 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.

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 a potential 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. Later, "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 km², 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 has a direct border 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 formation of new provinces in Papua region was carried out to provide equitable development across the Papua region and increase government efficiency. This was also the result of the aspirations of the people of Papua to improve their welfare, 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 area in Papua Region, which incorporates the usage of geographic location and topographical features in the names and express its view on the technical paper.