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**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names.**

Report of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia **

Submitted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia places great importance on the field of geographical names, recognizing them as one of the key components of geospatial information and an essential element for national development. Geographical names are not only fundamental for identifying locations but also serve as critical enablers for a wide range of sectors, including urban planning, transportation, environmental management, emergency response, cultural heritage preservation, and tourism development.

In the context of sustainable development, geographical names play a vital role by enhancing environmental awareness, supporting the conservation and management of natural resources, and promoting sustainable tourism initiatives that highlight the Kingdom's rich cultural and natural heritage.

They also facilitate effective communication, navigation, and the delivery of services, providing a common framework for government agencies, private sector organizations, and the public.

Moreover, standardized geographical names contribute significantly to informed decision-making processes by ensuring clarity, consistency, and reliability in geospatial data. They help unify national efforts across sectors, enabling more efficient planning and coordination, particularly in achieving the strategic objectives outlined in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

Through the leadership of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA) and the National Committee on Geographical Names, the Kingdom continues to strengthen its geographical names infrastructure, both nationally and internationally, as part of its broader vision to build a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation.

National Committee Objectives

The main objectives of the National Committee on Geographical Names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are:

1. To coordinate among relevant government agencies regarding the naming of new geographical features or the renaming of existing ones.
2. To collect geographical names, publish them, and prepare a database for their storage and management.
3. To prepare a national, indexed gazetteer to serve as a binding reference for all government agencies.
4. To represent the Kingdom both domestically and internationally.
5. To cooperate and participate internationally in the preparation of the International Gazetteer.

Core Functions and Responsibilities:

1. Develop mechanisms, frameworks, and methodologies for geographical names activities, and monitor their implementation according to the National Geospatial Data Governance Framework.
2. Collect, document, and maintain geographical names, ensuring effective, regular, and high-quality execution.
3. Manage and ensure the effective implementation of operations and methodologies related to the Romanization and standardization of geographical names to achieve standardized names at the national level.
4. Supervise the management and development of the Geographical Names Database.
5. Collect, locate, and classify geographical names according to the approved data structure.
6. Review and verify geographical names through both field and office verification processes.
7. Update and publish national gazetteers of geographical names.
8. Coordinate and collaborate with relevant government entities involved in geographical names to unify efforts.

9. Monitor geographical names activities, ensure adherence to established plans, prepare periodic reports, identify performance obstacles and ways to overcome them, and submit them for necessary decision-making

Activities and Achievements:

The activities initiated by the National Committee on Geographical Names in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the supervision of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA), and the decisions taken, have contributed to improving the process of collecting and documenting geographical names. The activities and work in the field of geographical names focus on coordination and collaboration with relevant government entities to unify efforts, strengthening relationships and ties among Arab countries, capacity building, and international participation, as outlined below:

1. Successfully held 13 meetings between 2023 and 2024, ensuring continuous coordination and progress in geographical names activities.
2. Reviewing and correcting the current Guide of Village and Settlement Names and working on preparing criteria and standards for the classification of cities, villages, and settlements to standardize efforts in this regard.
3. Approving and amending certain village and settlement names listed in the Official Nomenclature Guides issued by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing for the Asir Region.
4. Approving the renaming of some geographical names based on requests from government entities, including the renaming of Duba Port to Neom Port, while preserving the historical name of the port.
5. Romanizing and standardizing the writing of geographical names for the benefit of several entities, including the Ministry of Transport, the Heritage Commission, the King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah), the General Authority for Statistics, the Eastern Province Development Authority, the Asir Municipality, among other governmental and private organizations.
6. Updating the Geographical Names Database through field teams and by using data sources provided by government agencies.
7. Developing updated versions of the Romanization Tool for use on both web platforms and within ArcGIS Pro, to support government entities and enhance the standardization of geographical names across digital and geospatial applications

Regional and International Participation and Collaboration:

1. Hosting the 10th Arab Division Meeting, which was held in Jeddah Province from 10 to 12 November 2024.
2. His Excellency the President of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information and Chairman of the National Committee on Geographical Names, Dr. Eng. Mohammed bin Yahya Al-Sayel, contributed an article titled " GEOSA's Integrated Approach to Geographical Names and Geospatial Data Management" to the UNGEGN Bulletin, Issue No. 67, published in June 2024.
3. Strengthening international collaboration by inviting and hosting international experts from UNGEGN and the International Cartographic Association (ICA) to participate in the Geographical Names Forum held in Jeddah.
4. Active participation in the Arab Division Forum through the submission of numerous scientific research papers, presentations, participation in panel discussions, and active involvement in the exhibition held during the event
5. Leading the development of the Strategic Plan for the Arab Division of Experts on Geographical Names for the period 2025–2034, aimed at enhancing regional cooperation, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and supporting the standardization of geographical names across Arab countries.

Training and Capacity Building:

The General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA) has contributed to the field of geographical names by training and qualifying **300** trainees from various universities and government entities across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The training covered processes such as the collection, classification, documentation, and Romanization of geographical names, the creation of a standardized digital model for geographical names databases, and the use of field data collection applications.

Key Current and Future Projects and Activities:

1. Developing a Romanization System for Geographical Names utilizing artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities.
2. Developing the Geographical Names Portal; the prototype has been completed, and an international case study has also been finalized
3. Enhancing and updating the Geographical Names Database, with a new database structure already completed.
4. Preparing and publishing a national gazetteer in both print and digital formats.
5. Supporting and advancing technical and scientific studies and consultations for the work of the National Committee on Geographical Names.

Conclusion

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms its commitment to the standardization, documentation, and promotion of geographical names as an essential pillar of national identity, sustainable development, and geospatial information management. Through the dedicated efforts of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA) and the National Committee on Geographical Names, significant advancements have been achieved in 2024 in both national and international arenas.

Saudi Arabia remains strongly engaged in strengthening regional and global cooperation, building capacities, and developing modern digital tools and methodologies aligned with international standards.

The initiatives undertaken, including the development of the Geographical Names Portal, the advancement of Romanization tools, the enhancement of the national database, and leadership in regional strategic planning, demonstrate the Kingdom's forward-looking vision.

Looking ahead, Saudi Arabia is committed to continuing its contributions to the global efforts of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), while further integrating innovation, collaboration, and sustainable practices to ensure that geographical names continue to support national priorities and global objectives for years to come.