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Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Reports on the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, its divisions, working groups and task teams since the Ninth Conference

Report of the Arabic Division of Experts on Geographical Names: 2007-2012

Submitted by the Arabic Division**

Summary***

Together with the Directorate of Geographic Affairs in Lebanon, the Arabic Division of Experts on Geographical Names organized the fourth and fifth Arab Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which were held in Beirut from 16 to 22 June 2008 and 26 to 29 May 2010 respectively. Both conferences considered the standardization of geographical names in Arab countries; the importance of conforming to a standard system for the transliteration of Arabic; the preservation of the Arab heritage of geographical names; the establishment of a database for Arabic geographical names; the development of lexicons of Arabic terminology; and the promotion of the establishment of national associations responsible for standardizing geographical names.

The Arabic Division also held a meeting on the sidelines of the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, which was held in Nairobi from 5 to 12 May 2009; and two meetings during the twenty-sixth session of the Group, which was held in Vienna from 2 to 6 May 2011.

Arab experts participated in a number of regional and international meetings, including the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the Group of Experts; the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms, held in Austria in 2010; the seventeenth International Seminar on Sea Names, held in Vancouver, Canada, in

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** Prepared by Ahmed Kamel (Egypt), Chair of Arabic Division.

*** The full report is available in the language of submission only from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf10.html>.



2011; a workshop on establishing a road map for geographical names in the countries of Africa, held in Gaborone, Botswana, in November 2011; and a national workshop for the standardization of geographical names, held in South Africa in April 2012.

The working groups of the Arabic Division of Experts exerted sterling efforts between 2007 and 2012. The committee on gazetteers established a database of Arabic geographical names and contributed to Geonames, the database of geographical names of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The working group on toponymic terminology is preparing a standardized manual of Arabic terms, and the working group on transliteration systems is devising a standardized Arab transliteration system. The working group on the pronunciation of geographical names collected sound files of the pronunciation of the names of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants in Egypt, Tunisia and Oman and has prepared a report on the impact of local dialects in the Arab world on the pronunciation and transcription of geographical names.

The African and Arab States entered the contests on geographical names in Africa that were held on the sidelines of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts, and Egypt won second place at two successive sessions, while Tunisia won first place at the twenty-sixth session.
