

О состоянии систем романизации
ООН для географических названий
*Status of UN romanization systems
for geographical names*

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UNGEGN WG on Romanization Systems

- The basic mandate: considering and reaching agreement on a romanization system for geographic names proposed by a (donor) country.
Prerequisites:
 - sufficient time for appropriate consultations and an expression of all views on technical matters between the sponsoring country and the WG members
 - to be considered: whether the romanization system is based on sound scientific principles, the system's degree of reversibility, and the extent of its implementation on cartographic products (maps and charts) by the proposing country

Agenda of the WG

- 45 languages/scripts, incl.
 - 30 approved systems (Amharic*, Arabic*, Assamese*, **Belarusian**, Bengali*, **Bulgarian**, **Chinese**, **Greek**, Gujarati*, Hebrew[*], Hindi*, Kannada*, Khmer*, Macedonian Cyr.*, Malayalam*, Marathi*, **Mongolian in China**, Nepali*, Oriya*, **Persian**, Punjabi*, **Russian**, **Serbian**, Tamil*, Telugu*, **Thai**, **Tibetan**, **Uighur**, **Ukrainian**, Urdu*) [* – 17.5 not implemented]
 - 15 systems still being discussed (Armenian, Burmese, Dzongkha, Georgian, Japanese, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Korean, Lao, Maldivian, Mongolian Cyr., Pashto, Sinhalese, Tajik, Tigrinya)

Implementation

- Not implemented at all: Indian group of languages (Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, etc.; 13 in total)
- Implemented in the past but not any more (Amharic, Khmer, Macedonian Cyr.)
- Planned changes, not yet adopted (Arabic)
- Information not sufficient (Hebrew)
- Various extent of implementation (Belarusian, Greek, Persian, Russian, Ukrainian)

Languages/scripts under discussion

- Some form of national system in use (Armenian*, Dzongkha, Georgian*, Kirghiz, Maldivian), sometimes competitive systems (Japanese, Korean)
- Plans to work out such systems (Lao, Sinhalese)
- Waiting for the transfer of the script to Latin (Kazakh)
- No system whatsoever or no information (Burmese, Mongolian Cyr., Pashto, Tajik, Tigrinya)

Main difficulties

- Lack of national authorities on geographical names
- Lack of understanding of the importance of romanization systems
- Existence of competing systems
- Established practices of rendering geographical names

Main discussion points in the WG

- Two necessary prerequisites:
 - reversibility of the system
 - national implementation of the system
- Which of the two is more important?

Reversibility

- Not depending on the definition of reversibility, there are no 100 % reversible systems in use
- Based on one calculation the highest reversibility is 95 % (Arabic, Belarusian, Russian, Serbian), the lowest rate applies to systems whereby no reversibility could be calculated (Chinese, Mongolian in China, Thai, Tibetan)
- For the disputed new systems the reversibility was lower than before (Bulgarian from 95 % to 85 %, Persian from 95 % to 61 %)

Implementation - ?

- What does it actually mean?
- How important are various components of implementation?
- Who is to judge?

Implementation components

- Nationally:
 - implementation in maps (state vs. private) and databases
 - implementation on signs and public information
 - implementation in official documents
 - implementation of the system for other types of names (esp. personal names in passports)
- Internationally:
 - implementation in maps and databases
 - implementation in documents (and media?)

Implementation degree and “judges”

- Components either:
 - fully implemented
 - partially implemented
 - not implemented
- “Judges”
 - at least two experts, perhaps on an anonymous basis?

At the next conference perhaps..

- Plans to update the Arabic romanization
- Working on
 - Lao, Sinhalese
- Supporting the efforts
 - Armenian, Georgian, Khmer
- Trying to contact
 - Amharic, Maldivian; Mongolian ...