STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

INTRODUCTION

Geographic names standards are important not only to prevent ambiguity and confusion in spelling of geographic names but also in fulfilling the needs of commerce and international relations, and it is the goal of United Nations to establish such standards among its members (United Nations, 2007). Standardization is concerned with written forms of names including their script, spelling, word forms, writing marks and capitalization. Standardization is also aims to establish a convention for names conversion which is the process of converting geographic names from one written script to another. Although the written forms of many languages such as English use what is known as the Roman (Latin) script, other languages such as Dhivehi are recorded using other non-Roman scripts.

There are two main methods known as *transcription* and *transliteration* that are used for names conversion. Transcription is the conversion of sounds of one language into the closest corresponding written sound symbols of another. However, it is always not possible to accurately convert the sound symbols of one language to another without adding special marks (diacritics) and/or letter. Conversion using such additional diacritics and/or letters is called transliteration. The intended sounds of diacritics marks and other symbols are not usually understood by most people and for this reason transcription is often adopted for more everyday situations, using only the letters and letter combinations of a target alphabet, at the expense of the exact original pronunciation.

The Roman script has been adopted as a base for international use by the United Nations and it is recommended that a single romanization (transliteration) system should be developed for each non-Roman script. Additionally the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) recommends several factors that need to be considered when adopting a romanization system. They include:

1. The system should be reversible, that is to say, it should be possible to reconstruct the original non-Roman script form on the basis of romanization.
2. Using the system should be as simple and as clear-cut as possible. For example, if a character table is not adequate, the notes to the table should clarify all aspects of usage. It would not be to the advantage of the system if dictionaries and other sources

had to be consulted in order to obtain a correct romanization of names, or if the rules allowed for variations in the romanization of the same original script form.

3. The romanized name forms should be as easy as possible to write, read and memorize as well as store electronically. This would entail minimal use of diacritical marks, avoidance of difficult and unusual character sequences, etc. A systematic representation of phonological features is also recommended.

Currently no romanization for Thaana has been approved at the United Nations conference on the standardization of geographic names. However many methods are used to convert the geographic names written in *Thaana* to Roman alphabet. Some use diacritical marks where as others do not. This lack of standardization has led to considerable difficulties in communication as well as data comparison. Hence a romanization system needs to be adopted for use in the cartographic works produced by the Maldives Land and Survey Authority (MLSA) and by considering the above factors recommended by UNGEGN, the following romanization system without diacritical marks will be used in writing geographic feature names.

ROMANIZATION SYSTEM USED FOR THE GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

The following is the System of romanization (transliteration) for Maldivian script, Thaana. Thaana is written from right to left. Vowels are marked as diacritical marks accompanying a consonant character.

CONSONANTS

No	Thaana	Transliteration	No	Thaana	Transliteration	No	Thaana	Transliteration
1	ﬞ	h	9	ﬞ	v	17	ﬞ	s
2	ﬞ	sh	10	ﬞ	m	18	ﬞ	d
3	ﬞ	n[A]	11	ﬞ	f	19	ﬞ	z
4	ﬞ	r	12	ﬞ	dh	20	ﬞ	t
5	ﬞ	b	13	ﬞ	th	21	ﬞ	y
6	ﬞ	lh	14	ﬞ	l	22	ﬞ	p
7	ﬞ	k	15	ﬞ	g	23	ﬞ	j
8	ﬞ	([B])	16	ﬞ	gn	24	ﬞ	ch

[A] Romanized *n'* if used without any vowel (Ex: كٜسٜنٜ *kan'du*).

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Consonants with diacritical marks (used mainly in words of Arabic origin, corresponding Arabic characters and their romanizations are shown in parentheses)

No	Thaana	Transliteration	No	Thaana	Transliteration	No	Thaana	Transliteration
25	ﻪ	th'	30	ﺵ	sh'	35	ﻉ	a'
26	ﺡ	h'	31	ﺹ	s'	36	ﻍ	gh
27	ﺥ	kh	32	ﺽ	l'	37	ﻕ	q
28	ﺫ	dh'	33	ﻁ	t'	38	ﻭ	w
29	ﺯ	x	34	ﻅ	z'			

Vowels(◌ indicate any consonant)

1	◌	a	4	◌	ey	9	◌	o	13	◌	oo
2	◌	aa	6	◌	i	10	◌	oa			
3	◌	e	7	◌	ee	11	◌	u			

Notes

1. The ﻦ character is not romanized. If it bears a vowel, that vowel alone is romanized (Eg: ﺍﻳﺮﻭﻏﻲ *irugai*).

2. Words ending with ﻦ and ﺭ are romanized at the end as *h* (Eg: ﺭﺍ *rah*). In other cases, when ﻦ and ﺭ are used, the romanized value of the following consonant character is doubled (eg: ﺑﺗﻪ *batteh*), with the exception when the romanized form of the following character is a diagraph, in which case they are romanized with *h* followed by the diagraph (Eg: ﺍﻳﺗﻐﻠﻲ E*th*igili, ﻛﺭﺩﻭ Kere*h*dhoo, ﺳﻪﻟﻬﻓﺷﻲ Se*hlh*ifushi).

3. Character ﻭ is romanized *iy* (Eg: ﺍﻳﭘﻠﻫﻭ *aiypulhu*).

4. Except in 1, 2 and 3, Sukun ◌ is not romanized and it indicates the absence of a vowel after the consonant.

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