



Governmental Advisory Committee
Chairman

Kuala Lumpur, 9 September 2003

Circular letter from the GAC Chair, addressed to:

- *Governments, distinct economies and public authorities*
- *Members of the ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee*

Ref: SEC/029/03

Dear Sir or Madam:

**Subject: Reservation of Country Names in Dot Info
ICANN Board Resolutions of
10 September 2001 and 14 March 2002**

I refer to the above. It is possible that some of the governments, distinct economies and public authorities may not be familiar with the message contained in this letter but for the uninitiated, I urge you to read on. It is about protecting your country name in the generic top level domain name in Dot Info e.g. [www.\[country name\].info](http://www.[country name].info).

GAC Members will recall that on the basis of Advice from GAC at the Montevideo meeting, the ICANN Board adopted a Resolution (attachment 1) to reserve country names, that provides notably that the Registry for the .info TLD, managed by Afilias, temporarily reserve a list of country names based on the ISO 3166-1 standardised list of names. Subsequently Afilias carried out the requested temporary registration with respect to the names of countries that had not previously been registered. ICANN subsequently adopted a Resolution at its Accra meeting, (attachment 2), which provided that the 329 country names reserved should be made available for registration by the governments and public authorities of the areas associated with the names **until the end of year 2003**. The list of reserved names is published at:

http://www.afilias.info/whois_search/reserved_names

The process for releasing and registering these reserved names was established in cooperation with ICANN, Afilias and the GAC. The GAC Secretariat has received a number of enquiries and requests for registration from Accredited GAC representatives which have been duly forwarded to the ICANN staff and to Afilias for registration.

The current procedure is:

1. The Government or public authority concerned informs the GAC Secretariat of their request to register the name, and the designated beneficiary.
2. The GAC Secretariat authenticates the request and transfers it to the ICANN staff and to Afilias.
3. Afilias verifies the availability of the name and issues an authorisation number that is transmitted directly to the designated beneficiary in the country concerned.
4. The designated beneficiary (the Registrant) registers the name, with an accredited Afilias Registrar, using the authorisation number as their authority.

To date, most reserved names have still not yet been registered by the governments and public authorities concerned.

Without prejudice to an eventual decision by ICANN and Afilias to extend the present delay of 31 December 2003, all governments and public authorities concerned are now urged to take the necessary steps to **complete the reservation of their names as soon as possible**, if this has not already been done. Please note that when the temporary reservation is terminated, those country names that have not been registered at that time will fall into the pool of available names for private registration on a first-come-first served basis.

If your authorities wish to proceed with the registration of the reserved name(s) that correspond to the name of your country pursuant to the ISO-3166 list, please forward your application to the secretariat of the GAC at the following e-mail address:

gacsec@cec.eu.int

Please do not hesitate to contact the GAC Secretariat if you need more information about this process.

Sincerely,

Mohamed Sharil Tarmizi
GAC Chair

cc: GAC Vice Chairs; GAC Secretariat
ICANN, Afilias, WIPO, ITU.

Attachments 1: ICANN Board Resolution, 10 September 2001
2: ICANN Board Resolution, 14 March 2002

Attachment 1

Geographic and Geopolitical Names in .info Montevideo, 10 September 2001

Whereas ICANN's [Governmental Advisory Committee \(GAC\)](#) [has concluded](#) that "the issue of geographical and geopolitical names is very complex, and the subject of ongoing international discussion," and has stated its belief that these issues are particularly important in the context of the new Top Level Domain .info considering its "special nature";

Whereas, the GAC has [therefore suggested](#) that "interim ad hoc measures should be taken by ICANN and the Registries to prevent avoidable conflicts in .info";

Whereas, the Board has serious questions about the technical feasibility and practicality of responding to this concern through reservations of specific domain names, but it also appreciates that without some action to maintain the status quo ante, the "ongoing international discussion" referenced in the GAC communication could be pre-empted by developments in the registration of .info names;

Whereas, under all these circumstances the Board has determined that it is appropriate to take temporary steps to prevent the registration of such names in order to allow it and the community the time to consider carefully this issue and determine what if any policy should be adopted with respect to it;

Whereas, the registry operator for .info has informed ICANN staff that it plans to timely challenge any facially unqualified registrations, including registrations of the names of countries and distinct economies contained in the [ISO 3166-1 list](#);

Whereas, the contract between ICANN and Afilias, the registry operator for .info, provides in [Section 3.6.3](#), that ICANN may instruct the Registry Operator "to maintain the registration of up to 5000 domain names within the domain of the Registry TLD for use by ICANN . . .";

Whereas, the invocation of this contractual power with respect to (1) the names of countries and distinct economies contained in the ISO 3166-1 list that have not yet been registered during the .info Sunrise Period, and (2), following a successful challenge by the registry operator for .info, any such names returned to the database prior to any further attempt to register those names would have the practical effect of preserving the status quo until the completion of further consideration within ICANN and elsewhere over appropriate treatment of these names;

Resolved [01.92], the General Counsel is directed to take appropriate action to preserve the Board's ability to take action with respect to the registration in .info of names of countries and distinct economies contained in the ISO 3166-1 list , including exercising ICANN's contractual power to instruct the Registry Operator for .info to maintain the registration of such names that have not yet been registered during the Sunrise Period, and any other such names that are returned to the database following a successful challenge by the Registry Operator, for a period to extend through ICANN's March 2002 meeting, unless that period is shortened or extended by further Board action;

Further resolved [01.93] that the President is directed to propose to the Board, within the next 30 days, an action plan for rapid analysis of the technical and other issues related to the concerns raised by the GAC.

**Geographic and Geopolitical Names in .info
Accra, 14 March 2002**

Whereas, in [resolution 01.93](#) the President was directed to propose to the Board an action plan for rapid analysis of the technical and other issues related to registration of domain names in .info corresponding to geographic and geopolitical names;

Whereas, on [11 October 2001 the Names Council adopted a resolution](#) commenting on this issue, and on 26 October 2001 the [Governmental Advisory Committee submitted additional commentary](#), both of which were posted on ICANN web sites;

Whereas, the [President's proposed action plan](#) was posted on the ICANN website on 9 October 2001, proposing creation of an .info Country Names Discussion Group (ICNG) consisting of Board members and representatives of GAC participants and additional individuals invited by the President;

Whereas, in [resolution 01.122](#) the Board accepted the President's recommendation to appoint the ICNG;

Whereas, under [resolution 01.123](#) the President invited representatives from WIPO, Afilias, and the DNSO Chair also to participate in the ICNG;

Whereas, the ICNG extensively discussed the issues through a preliminary physical meeting, conference calls, and e-mail;

Whereas, the ICNG's [draft final report](#) was posted for public comment on 21 February 2002;

Whereas, [public comment and input to the draft report](#) by the community occurred;

Whereas, the ICNG notes that while it recommends to proceed with restriction of use of the reserved names in .info to governments and distinct economies, because of the variety of ways of spelling country names, the ICNG recommended exploring the potential utility of a new top level domain (TLD) specifically for uses only by governments of countries and distinct economies; and

Whereas, the ICNG deserves recognition as an example of the ability of the Board and the GAC, as an advisory body, to constructively reach resolution on a controversial issue;

Resolved [02.42] that the Board thanks the ICNG for its work and accepts its report;

Resolved [02.43] that the Board adopts the ICNG recommendation that the 329 country names reserved under resolution 01.92 should be made available for registration by the governments and public authorities of the areas associated with the names and directs the General Counsel to cause those names to be made available to those governments and public authorities according to procedures established by the GAC;

Resolved [02.44] that, in view of the second recommendation in the ICNG report, the Board invites the GAC to investigate the level of interest by governments and distinct economies for a TLD to be used internationally for official purposes, and if established, what criteria and ground rules are necessary for such a TLD.