
Two Character Country Codes at the Second Level in New gTLDs

Session 7 - Two Character Codes Update Discussion - Registration Search Tool Evaluation

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Session Objectives

During this session, GAC members will have an opportunity to share their assessments and experiences and make suggestions for improvements to the [Two-character Country Code Registration Search Tool](#) that was released by ICANN org prior to ICANN64.

Background

Two-character country codes are internationally recognized codes established by the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) that designate every country and most dependent areas a two-letter combination. These codes (set forth in the “ISO 3166” list) act like an acronym, that stands for a country or a state. The Domain Name System uses these codes to identify top level country code domains on the Internet (ccTLDs).

In the context of the first round of new gTLDs, ICANN’s community discussed how to guarantee that the release of these two letter codes at the second level will not cause any confusion with the current use of these two letter codes at the first level.

Specification 5, Section 2 of the New gTLD Registry Agreement requires that for registry operators to reserve two-character ASCII labels within the TLD at the second level.

Section 2 states that the reserved two-character labels “may be released to the extent that a Registry Operator reaches agreement with the related government and country-code manager of the string as specified in the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 standard. The Registry Operator may also propose

the release of these reservations based on its implementation of measures to avoid confusion with the corresponding country codes, subject to approval by ICANN.”

Thus, the current regime for overseeing the use of country codes at the Second Level in New gTLDs is that of a [blanket authorization and associated Measures to Avoid Confusion with Corresponding Country Codes](#) which New gTLD Operators (Registries) are expected to implement. This regime was introduced pursuant to an ICANN Board [resolution](#) (8 November 2016) which retired a previously existing [Authorization Process for Release of Two-characters ASCII Labels](#), itself the result of several years of interactions between governments, the GAC and both the ICANN Organization and ICANN Board.

The November 2016 Board resolution was of significant interest to GAC members for a substantial period of time. New readers to this issue may benefit from review of several previous GAC Briefing documents recounting the recent history of this subject:

- ICANN63 - Barcelona - Pre-Meeting Briefing - [icann63-2-characters-briefing-v2-20oct18.pdf](#) ;
- ICANN64 - Kobe - Pre-Meeting Briefing - https://gac.icann.org/file-asset/public/icann64-ga-briefing-2-characters-country-codes.pdf?language_id=1 ; and
- ICANN65 - Marrakech - Pre-Meeting Briefing - https://gac.icann.org/file-asset/public/icann65-gac-briefing-02.2-two-char-country-codes-at-2nd-level-v1-17jun19.pdf?language_id=1

Some GAC Members expressed concerns regarding the 2016 decision resulting in the current process for the release of country codes, particularly in view of previous GAC Advice. Other GAC Members are concerned with the use of their country codes at the second level of the DNS. Those concerns include consumer confusion and the use of country codes without the permission of relevant authorities.

After much dialogue and exchange of information between concerned Members of the GAC, the ICANN Board and the ICANN org on this subject (recounted in the briefing documents above), ICANN org developed a web-based tool to enable interested GAC members to monitor registrations of their two-character country and territory codes at the second level across all TLDs. After much progress, the final phase of that tool development was completed shortly before the ICANN64 Kobe Meeting.

The current Two-Character country code registration search tool is basically a data table that enables GAC members to monitor registrations of their two-character country and territory codes at the second level across all TLDs. The tool displays an up-to-date view of all current two-letter second-level domain registrations across both gTLDs and ccTLDs, and an approximate date of registration. The table allows the user to quickly toggle between viewing gTLDs and ccTLDs and includes dynamic sorting, filtering and a downloadable dataset to Excel for offline analysis.

On 26 February 2019, ICANN org formally introduced this tool to the GAC Membership in a demonstration webinar. A recording of that webinar is available on the GAC Website at: <https://gac.icann.org/sessions/demo-webinar-new-tool-to-monitor-2-character-country-codes-at-the-second-level> (GAC Member login required).

At the ICANN64 Kobe meeting, GAC members agreed that that they should have time to use and evaluate the tool and that it would be appropriate for feedback to be shared with ICANN org staff at the ICANN66 Montreal meeting.

Recent Relevant Developments

Registration Search Tool Evaluation

At the ICANN65 Marrakech meeting the GAC conducted a plenary session on the registration search tool (see

<https://gac.icann.org/sessions/icann65-block-7-session-7-1-second-level-country-code-registration-search>). During the session, ICANN org staff briefed GAC members on the history of the issue and an overview of the current authorization regime and conducted a live demonstration of the use of the registration search tool. During the session, certain GAC members also shared preliminary observations about the tool and their experiences with it.

Based on those Marrakech discussions, ICANN org staff has worked to develop a survey to collect information from GAC members about their use of the tool. That survey may be shared with the GAC prior to the ICANN65 meeting. ICANN org staff will also be present at the GAC meeting in Montreal to get first-hand feedback about the tool from GAC members.

ICANN65 GAC Marrakech Communiqué

As “Follow-Up on Previous Advice”, the GAC most recently addressed this subject in the ICANN65 GAC Marrakech Communiqué. In that document, the GAC stated

“The GAC remains concerned that GAC advice on the procedure for the release of country codes at the second level under new gTLDs was not taken into consideration as intended, and advises that meaningful steps be taken to ensure this does not happen in the future.

Moreover, the GAC notes the provision of a search tool by ICANN. GAC Members have highlighted that the effectiveness of the tool is still being evaluated.

The GAC urges ICANN to continue to engage with concerned GAC members in order to address their concerns.”

ICANN Board Scorecard Response to GAC Marrakech Communiqué

In its 8 September 2019 scorecard response to the GAC Marrakech Communiqué (see, <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/gac-icann65-marrakech-communique-scorecard-08sep19-en.pdf>) the Board stated,

“The Board is aware of the ongoing concerns among some GAC members regarding the consideration of GAC advice on the procedure for the release of two-character country codes at the second level under new gTLDs. The ICANN org has provided detailed explanations of its process and the Board’s consideration of relevant GAC Advice in a memo to the GAC dated 22 January 2019 as well as in a Historical Overview of the process. The Board also notes that during the BGIG meeting at ICANN65 in Marrakech it was discussed that the BGIG meeting at ICANN66 in Montreal could be used to discuss the two-character search tool.

Between now and ICANN66, the Board recommends that GAC members use the tool to gain experience and to note any concerns, where appropriate.”

GAC Action

During this session, GAC members will have an opportunity to share their assessments and experiences and make suggestions for improvements to the [Two-character Country Code Registration Search Tool](#) that was released by ICANN org prior to ICANN64.

Key Reference Sources

- ICANN65 - Marrakech GAC Communique -
- ICANN Second Level Country Code Registration Search Tool:
<https://gac.icann.org/activity/second-level-country-code-registration-search>

Further Information

- ICANN Org Website Reference Page:
<https://www.icann.org/resources/two-character-labels>
- GAC Activity Web Page - Two Character Country Codes at the Second Level:
<https://gac.icann.org/activity/two-letter-country-codes-at-the-second-level>

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