

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE DELEGATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF COUNTRY CODE TOP LEVEL DOMAINS

Presented by the Governmental Advisory Committee

1. PREAMBLE

1.1. The purpose of this document is to set out a general framework of principles and guidelines for the relationship between national governments, the Registry of the country code associated with that country, and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). However, the situation varies significantly between countries. This framework is intended to help establish, not constrain or dictate, the development of the three-way relationship. Governments, country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) Registries and ICANN share the responsibility for ensuring a Domain Name System that is stable, secure, open, and easily accessible.

1.2. The main principle is the principle of subsidiarity. ccTLD policy should be set locally, unless it can be shown that the issue has global impact and needs to be resolved in an international framework. Most of the ccTLD policy issues are local in nature and should therefore be addressed by the local Internet Community, according to national law.

1.3. These principles are intended as a guide to the relationships between Governments, their ccTLD and ICANN. They are not intended to be binding and need both Governments and Registries voluntarily to agree to apply them within their legal framework. If either the Government or the Registry decide not to adopt the principles, this cannot be held against the Registry, and the Registry still has a valid existence.

1.4. The Internet has evolved from a tool primarily reserved for computer and networking research, to a global medium for commerce, education, and communication since ccTLDs were first established and, in particular, since [RFC 1591](#) was issued. Advances in the global information infrastructure, especially the Internet, are of crucial importance for national and global economic growth. Top Level Domains (i.e. domains in the top level of the global domain name system) play a significant role in this respect. ccTLDs have acquired an increasing part in the domain names market and are seen by many as part of the Internet identities of their country or geopolitical territory.

1.5. The initial selection for the management of ccTLDs was by “selecting a designated manager for a domain that was able to do an equitable, just, honest, and

competent job”. This was a mutual recognition of rights and duties and this should remain the fundamental basis for any future selection of ccTLD Registries. There is currently a variety of legacy ccTLD situations with different legal or contractual frameworks.

1.6. It is recalled that the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) to ICANN has previously adopted the general principle that the Internet naming system is a public resource in the sense that its functions must be administered in the public or common interest. The WSIS Declaration of December 2003 states that *“policy authority for Internet-related public policy issues is the sovereign right of States. They have rights and responsibilities for international Internet-related public policy issues.”* This is in the context that, *“Governments, as well as private sector, civil society and the United Nations and other international organizations have an important role and responsibility in the development of the Information Society and, as appropriate, in decision-making processes. Building a people-centred Information Society is a joint effort which requires cooperation and partnership among all stakeholders.”*

1.7. It is recalled that the WSIS Plan of action of December 2003 invites *“Governments to manage or supervise, as appropriate, their respective country code top-level domain name”*. Any such involvement should be based on appropriate national laws and policies. It is recommended that governments should work with their local Internet community in deciding on how to work with the ccTLD Registry.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THIS DOCUMENT

2.1. This document updates the principles set out in February 2000. It takes account of experience and best practice for the delegation and administration of ccTLDs. It is intended as a framework which the different parties can use to help define the way they work together. How these principles and guidelines may be used depends on local/national laws and traditions. They may contribute to clarifying the bilateral relationship between these parties. They could also contribute to the development of:

- a communication between the relevant government or public authority and ICANN about their respective roles;
- a communication between the relevant government or public authority and the ccTLD Registry where this is deemed appropriate by the government and Registry concerned or provided for by national laws; and
- an appropriate communication between ICANN and the ccTLD Registry.

2.2. From a GAC perspective, the first two of these types of communications are of primary importance, since governments are directly involved. The third type often involves two private parties and is of interest to governments to the extent it affects public policy interests.

3. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

3.1 “Communication” might include a law, regulation, agreement, document, contract, memorandum of understanding or any other form of relationship as appropriate.

3.2 ‘Country code top level domain’ or ‘ccTLD’ means a domain in the top level of the global domain name system assigned according to a two-letter code based on the ISO 3166-1 standard ‘Codes for the Representation of Names of Countries and Their Subdivisions.’

3.3 ‘Delegation’ means the procedures that need to be taken by ICANN/IANA for the inclusion of a ccTLD in the DNS root upon receipt of an authoritative request.

3.4 ‘Re-delegation’ means the change of the person or body responsible for the administration of a ccTLD Registry effected by ICANN/IANA upon receipt of an authoritative request.

3.5 ‘Authoritative request’ for the purposes of this document is the request for the delegation or re-delegation concerning a ccTLD Registry addressed to ICANN/IANA by the appropriate body, according to national law, showing that the request is correctly made, authoritative and is in line with applicable law or, in the absence of such law, RFC 1591.

3.6 ‘ccTLD Registry’ means the entity (whether an organisation, enterprise or individual) responsible for managing and administering a ccTLD.

3.7 ‘Designation’ means decision by the relevant government or public authority or any other body foreseen by the national law of the country concerned on the person or body that will be the manager of the relevant ccTLD Registry according to national law.

3.8 ‘Relevant government or public authority’ means the national government or public authority of a distinct economy as recognised in international fora, as those terms are used in the ICANN bylaws and the GAC Operating Principles, associated with the country code.

3.9 ‘Local Internet community’ means the local community in the country associated with the country code, and includes the national government. This definition is specific to the purposes identified in this document and not broader.

4. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OR PUBLIC AUTHORITY

4.1 Principles

4.1.1. Ultimate public policy authority over the relevant ccTLD rests with the relevant government or public authority; how this authority is exercised is determined by applicable law.

4.1.2. Every country or distinct economy with a government or public authority recognised in accordance with article 3.8 above should be able to ask for its appropriate country code to be represented as a ccTLD in the DNS and to designate the Registry for the ccTLD concerned.

4.2 Guidelines

4.2.1. The relevant government or public authority is strongly encouraged to ensure that the ccTLD is being administered in the public interest, within the framework of its national public policy and relevant laws and regulations.

4.2.2. The relevant government or public authority should be able to ensure that domain name registration in the ccTLD by Registrars benefits from effective and fair conditions of competition, at appropriate levels and scale of activity.

4.2.3. To give effect to their public policy interests, governments or public authorities may wish to base any communication with ccTLD Registries on the terms outlined in Clause 9.

4.2.4. In making a designation or acceptance for a ccTLD Registry, the government or public authority should take into consideration the importance of long-term stability in the administration and management of the ccTLD and in the DNS. In most cases, such stability may be best served through the designation of an organisation or an enterprise rather than a specific individual.

5. ROLE OF ccTLD REGISTRY

5.1 Principles

5.1.1. The ccTLD Registry is a trustee for the delegated ccTLD, and has a duty to serve the local Internet community as well as the global Internet community. Some governments or public authorities may require their agreement before any sub-contracting or sub-licensing of the delegation. Where this agreement is given, the government or public authority should notify ICANN.

5.1.2. In performing their functions ccTLD Registries are subject to applicable law.

5.1.3. Any claim of intellectual property right in the two-letter code in itself shall not impede a change of Registry.

5.2 Guidelines

5.2.1. Any intellectual property rights that the ccTLD Registry may have acquired as the result of delegation or which any entity may have acquired as a result of the management, administration or marketing of the ccTLD shall be taken into account and dealt with in accordance with applicable law in the case of a re-delegation. Such rights should not be exercised in a way that unnecessarily impedes re-delegation of a ccTLD Registry decided according to national law or under the circumstances described under clause 7 below.

5.2.2. The ccTLD Registry should work cooperatively with the relevant government or public authority of the country or territory for which the ccTLD has been established, within the legal framework, and in line with appropriate public policy objectives of the government of the country or distinct economy concerned.

5.2.3. The ccTLD Registry, and the Registry's administrative contact, should be resident or incorporated in the territory and/or jurisdiction of the relevant government or public authority unless formally decided otherwise by the relevant government or public authority. In any event the ccTLD should operate in a way that is consistent with the laws and public policy of the relevant government or public authority.

5.2.4. The ccTLD Registries have the opportunity to participate in the ICANN Policy Development Processes through the Country Code Names Supporting Organisation (ccNSO). The GAC encourages the ongoing extension of the ccNSO's membership.

5.2.5. In any sub-contracting of the technical operations of the ccTLD Registry or administrative and management functions of the ccTLD, the sub-contract should state that the delegation itself is not reassigned to the sub-contractor. Any re-assignment would have to be in accordance with the provisions of Clause 7.

6. ROLE OF ICANN

Principle

6.1 ICANN's mission with respect to ccTLD Registries is to co-ordinate the Internet's systems of top-level domain unique identifiers, and to ensure their stable and secure operation, in particular: the allocation and assignment of the sets of unique Internet identifiers; the operation and evolution of the root name server system; and the policy development related to these technical functions as defined in the ICANN Bylaws.

7. PRINCIPLES RELATING TO DELEGATIONS AND RE-DELEGATIONS

7.1. Principle

Delegation and re-delegation is a national issue and should be resolved nationally and in accordance with national laws, taking into account the views of all local stakeholders and the rights of the existing ccTLD Registry. Once a final formal decision has been reached, ICANN should act promptly to initiate the process of delegation or re-delegation in line with authoritative instructions showing the basis for the decision.

7.2. Guidelines

7.2.1. Where the Registry operating the country code TLD does not have a formal communication with its national government and its core functions are operated under a different jurisdiction, any action to re-delegate needs to take account of the legal framework in the country where the Registry is based. In the event of a re-delegation, registrants in the ccTLD should be afforded continued name resolution or, if necessary, a mutually agreed period in which to transfer to another TLD.

7.2.2. In the case of a disputed re-delegation request where the relevant country code TLD Registry is based in another country and where there is not a contract specifying which national law should apply, the government and ccTLD should seek to find a mutually acceptable solution. Where there is evidence that local stakeholders and the Internet community support the government proposal for re-delegation, but where there is no legal basis for imposing the re-delegation, ICANN may contribute to identifying alternative solutions to resolve the problem.

7.2.3. It is strongly recommended that, in the case of new delegations or re-delegations, particularly where a Registry is based out of country, national governments and Registry managers should agree on the legal framework and specific contract conditions to be used to judge any subsequent disputes or re-delegation requests.

8. GUIDELINES FOR A COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT OR PUBLIC AUTHORITY AND ICANN

8.1. In cases in which there is a communication between the relevant government or public authority and ICANN/IANA, it should include the nominated, designated point of contact for communications with the relevant government or public authority.

8.2. In the absence of a communication, or where there are reasons for doubt, ICANN/IANA should consult with the diplomatic authorities or the Governmental Advisory Committee members for the government or distinct economy concerned on the competent authority and appropriate point of contact with their administration for communications.

8.3. Recognising ICANN's responsibilities to achieve consensus in the creation of any new generic TLDs, ICANN should avoid, in the creation of new generic TLDs, well known and famous country, territory or place names; well known and famous country, territory or regional language or people descriptions; or ISO 639 Codes for representation of languages unless in agreement with the relevant governments or public authorities.

9. GUIDELINES FOR A COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT OR PUBLIC AUTHORITY AND THE ccTLD REGISTRY

9.1 Depending on the needs in individual national circumstances, it may be appropriate for the relevant government or public authority to establish a communication with its newly designated Registry. Any such communication could include the following provisions:

9.1.1 Term, performance clauses, applicable law, opportunity for review and process for revocation.

9.1.2 A commitment by the Registry to operate the ccTLD in the interest of the relevant local Internet community and the global Internet community.

9.1.3 Confirmation that the ccTLD is operated in trust in the public interest and that any claim of intellectual property rights in the two-letter code in itself shall not impede any possible future change of Registry.

9.1.4 Conditions to ensure the transfer of all relevant DNS data to the new Registry, if, for any reason, a reassignment of delegation to a new Registry is necessary, taking all interests into account.

9.1.5 References to ensure the safety and integrity of the Registry databases.

9.1.6 Conditions for the efficient and effective resolution of disputes arising from domain name registration.

10. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ICANN AND THE ccTLD REGISTRY

10.1 Principle

A Registry should not sub-contract part or all of the technical operations of the ccTLD Registry affecting the global stability of the DNS without ensuring that the sub-contractor has the appropriate technical capability, and informing ICANN accordingly.

10.2 Guidelines

10.2.1. The communication between ICANN and the Registry should as a minimum contain ICANN's commitment to:

10.2.1.1 Maintain, or cause to be maintained, a stable, secure, authoritative and publicly available database of relevant information for each ccTLD (see below);

10.2.1.2 Ensure that authoritative and accurate root zone information is generated in a timely manner from such database and contribute to the root servers' operating in stable and secure manner. Also, ensure that changes to the root zone database are made on the basis of reliable authentication procedures confirming the authority and identity of the requesting party;

10.2.1.3 Maintain, or cause to be maintained, authoritative records and an audit trail regarding ccTLD delegations and records related to these delegations; and

10.2.1.4 Inform the Registry in a timely manner of any changes to ICANN's contact information.

10.2.2 The communication between ICANN and the Registry should contain the Registry's commitment to:

10.2.2.1. Cause to be operated and maintained in a stable and secure manner the authoritative primary and secondary name servers for the ccTLD, adequate to resolve names within the ccTLD for users throughout the Internet, and any sub-domains over which they retain administrative authority;

10.2.2.2. Inform ICANN in a timely manner of any changes to the ccTLD's contact information held by ICANN;

10.2.2.3. Set out clear conditions and parameters for any payment by the ccTLD. ♦

Mar del Plata, 5 April 2005