

Revised Initial Report on Vertical Integration Between Registrars and Registries

STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Revised Initial Report prepared by the Vertical Integration PDP Working Group and ICANN Staff is delivered to the GNSO Council on 18 August 2010 as part of the Vertical Integration Policy Development Process (PDP). A Final Report will be prepared following the conclusion of the Working Group's deliberations.

SUMMARY

This report is submitted to the GNSO Council to inform the GNSO Council of the status of its deliberations in the GNSO PDP on Vertical Integration Between Registrars and Registries following the closure of the Public Comment Forum on the [Initial Report](#) submitted 23 July 2010. This Revised Initial Report describes various proposed solutions for restrictions on vertical integration between registrars and registries for adoption in the New gTLD Program.

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1. Executive Summary

This Revised Initial Report on the Vertical Integration PDP is prepared in accordance with the rules applicable to the GNSO Policy Development Process as stated in the ICANN Bylaws, Annex A (see <http://www.icann.org/general/bylaws.htm#AnnexA>) and follows the closure of the public comment period on the [Initial Report](#) dated 23 July 2010 to the GNSO Council (Initial Report). The [Initial Report](#) was posted for public comment for 20 days. The comments submitted during the Public Comment Forum will be analyzed and used to redraft the Revised Initial Report into a Final Report to be considered by the GNSO Council for further action.

This Revised Initial Report describes the current status of the work undertaken by the Vertical Integration PDP Working Group (referred to as the VI Working Group) to assist ICANN in developing its implementation processes for the New gTLD Program.

As described more fully below, the VI Working Group has developed a number of proposals to address vertical integration for the new gTLD program but has not reached consensus as to which one to recommend. However, several principles are emerging which, when drafting is complete, may be supported by the VI Working Group members.

One such principle is that compliance, and enforcement thereof, plays a pivotal role in the New gTLD Program and the policy framework that surrounds it. As a result, a detailed compliance program should be defined, and appropriate resources should be allocated by ICANN, as it finalizes its implementation details for the New gTLD Program.

Another principle that is moving toward support by the VI Working Group is that, in the event ICANN adopts a requirement of strict separation between registrars and registries, an exceptions procedure should be incorporated into the New gTLD Program.

The third principle that might see early support is the possibility that there be a specific exception for a category of applicants known as the single registry, single user (SRSU) TLDs. These principles are described more fully in Section 4 of this Revised Initial Report.

This Revised Initial Report also describes several proposals regarding vertical integration that have been developed and analyzed by the VI Working Group. No proposal has achieved consensus support within the VI Working Group. These proposals are included for the purpose of seeking public comment and will be subject to further analysis and debate as the VI Working Group continues to strive to develop a consensus position to recommend to the GNSO Council.

It is important to note that although a consensus for the general principles described in Section 4 may be achieved, the details of these principles are still being actively developed and debated within the VI Working Group. This Revised Initial Report is unique in that it does not include any recommendations from the VI Working Group, but instead reflects draft positions and initial observations that are expected to be refined during the weeks ahead. Due to the expedited nature of the task at hand, the purpose of this Revised Initial Report is to inform the ICANN community of the progress made to date on the principles and substantive proposals described herein.

2. Background and Objectives

2.1 Background on the Vertical Integration PDP Activities.

On 3 September 2009, Councillor Mary Wong on behalf of the Non-Commercial Users Constituency (NCUC) requested an Issues Report on the topic of Vertical Integration between Registries and Registrars. This request was approved by the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) on 26 September 2009.¹¹ In approving this request, the GNSO Council recognized that opening up the market to many new TLD operators might call into question some of the assumptions on which the separation of registry and registrar functions is based. The GNSO Council noted that the new gTLD policies passed by the Council did not provide any guidance regarding the proper approach to cross ownership and vertical integration, but instead implicitly suggest that the status quo be left in place. As a result, the Issues Report was requested to assist the GNSO in determining whether a PDP should be initiated regarding what policies would best serve to promote competition and to protect users and registrants.

On 11 December 2009, Staff delivered the Issues Report on vertical integration between registries and registrars < <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/report-04dec09-en.pdf> > to the GNSO Council. The Issues Report included recommendations that, although policy potentially could be developed in this area, given the status of implementation of the GNSO's new gTLD policy, this issue would be more effectively addressed through GNSO participation in the new gTLD implementation planning process. As a result, Staff recommended that consideration of launching a PDP on vertical integration be delayed until after the launch of new gTLDs to gather data on the impact of the initial distribution model, and to determine whether there has been competitive harm in the domain name market.

¹¹ The GNSO Council resolution approving the Request for an Issues Report is posted at: <http://gns0.icann.org/resolutions/#200909>

On 28 January 2010, the GNSO Council decided to initiate a PDP on vertical integration between registries and registrars on an expedited basis. The GNSO Resolution calls for the PDP to evaluate which policy recommendations, if any, should be developed on the topic of vertical integration between registrars and registries affecting both new gTLDs and existing gTLDs, as may be possible under existing contracts and as allowed under the ICANN Bylaws. The GNSO Council instructed the Working Group to deliver its Final Report to the GNSO Council on an expedited timeframe. The GNSO Resolutions approving the PDP and the charter for the VI Working Group (Charter) are described in **Annex C** and **Annex H** of this Report.

Upon approval of the Charter on 10 March 2010, the GNSO Council formed a working group and solicited volunteers from the ICANN community to participate in the PDP on vertical integration. Approximately 75 members joined the working group, the largest GNSO working group of recent times, reflecting the significant interest in this issue in the ICANN community. A list of the members of the VI Working Group is included in **Annex D** of this Report.

A public comment forum on the initiation of the Vertical Integration PDP ran from 29 March to 18 April 2010.² This public comment forum provided an opportunity for the public to comment on any aspect related to the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars that should be taken into account by the VI Working Group as part of its deliberations. A summary of the comments submitted during this period is presented on **Annex E** of this Report. The VI Working Group also solicited and received Stakeholder Group and Constituency Statements on the topic of vertical integration. These statements are included in **Annex F** of this Report.

The VI Working Group issued its [Initial Report](#) on 23 July 2010 to the GNSO Council and opened a 20 day public comment forum as a required step of the GNSO Council's policy development process as specified in the ICANN Bylaws. A summary of the comments

² For more information on the Public Comment Forum for Vertical Integration, please refer to: <http://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/public-comment-201004-en.htm#vi>

submitted during this period is presented on **Annex L** of this Revised Initial Report. The VI Working Group has not yet considered and analyzed the comments received during the Public Comment Forum, but expects to do so as it continues to work towards developing consensus recommendations for the GNSO Council to consider.

2.2. Background on the New gTLD Implementation Activities Affecting Vertical Integration.

The issue of revisiting vertical integration of registries arose as a result of concerns expressed by members of the ICANN community in 2007 when it became clear that the GNSO policy recommendations on the New gTLD process were going to be unable to address the issue of the economic, business and/or legal relationships between registries and registrars in developing the implementation details for the New gTLD Program. In response to the concerns expressed by the ICANN community, and at the request of the ICANN community, ICANN retained the research firm CRA International who delivered a report on 23 October 2008, commonly referred to as the CRA Report³. The CRA Report recommended that “ICANN . . . re-examine the economic case for the separation requirement, and in particular to consider whether it might be possible to relax the requirement, initially only in limited cases. Recognizing that it is difficult to reverse the decision once regulations have been removed, we would encourage ICANN to move slowly, but deliberately and in consultation with the industry, towards permitting integration of registry and registrar services under many, but not all, circumstances.”⁴

After the publication of the CRA Report, ICANN Staff initiated a series of consultations with the community on the issue of vertical integration. As a result, Staff published a proposed model in the Draft Applicant Guidebook- Version 25 that included certain restrictions. Because the proposal included in the Draft Applicant Guidebook-v2 solicited substantial discussion and

³ The CRA Report is posted at <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/crai-report-24oct08-en.pdf>

⁴ Id. at 29

⁵ The Draft Applicant Guidebook-Version 2 is posted at <http://icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/draft-rfp-clean-18feb09-en.pdf>

debate among the ICANN community, Staff revised the Draft Applicant Guidebook- v3 to remove the proposed model, and instead sought further guidance and suggestions from the community on the appropriate model for the launch of new gTLDs.

In addition, ICANN Staff retained the services of two economists, Steven Salop and Joshua Wright, to assist in advising ICANN on economic issues related to the effects of vertical integration between registries and registrars on registrants. A report, entitled “Registry-Registrar Separation: Vertical Integration Options”⁶ was presented to the ICANN Board of Directors at its meeting on February 4, 2010 and subsequently made available to the ICANN community on March 8, 2010.⁷ In that report, which was also presented to the VI Working Group and discussed on April 29, 2010⁸, Professors Salop and Wright explained that vertical integration and vertical contracts between registries and registrars could create both competitive harms and competitive benefits. In their opinion, the most important factor in predicting whether vertical integration is capable of generating competitive harms is the presence of market power. Professors Salop and Wright encouraged the adoption of a case-by-case approach with referral to a government competition authority for evaluation and action, if deemed necessary.

Resolution of these issues is currently being managed under Board guidance by Staff through its implementation process for the New gTLD Program. In Nairobi, the ICANN Board adopted several resolutions related to the New gTLD Program. One of these resolutions provided guidance to ICANN Staff on the topic of vertical integration between registrars and registries⁹. The Board resolution noted the GNSO’s active policy development process on the issue of vertical integration. The Board did not want to create an environment in which it

⁶ <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/registry-registrar-separation-vertical-integration-options-salop-wright-28jan10-en.pdf>.

⁷ See <http://blog.icann.org/2010/03/vertical-integration-options-report-available-to-community/>.

⁸ To review a transcript of the VI Working Group’s discussions with Professors Salop and Wright, please refer to <http://gns0.icann.org/meetings/transcript-vertical-integration-economists-29apr10-en.pdf>.

⁹ The Nairobi Board resolution pertaining to the issue of vertical integration between registrars and registries in the New gTLD Program is posted at: <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5>

would be difficult to later harmonize the new gTLD marketplace with the GNSO policy result, but recognized the importance of establishing a baseline approach to registry-registrar separation for the new gTLD process to move ahead. As a result, within the context of the new gTLD process, the Board resolved that there will be strict separation of entities offering registry services and those acting as registrars. No co-ownership will be allowed. The Board acknowledged that if a policy becomes available from the GNSO, and approved by the Board prior to the launch of the New gTLD program, that policy will be considered by the Board for adoption as part of the New gTLD Program.

In advance of the ICANN Brussels meeting, ICANN Staff published the Draft Applicant Guidebook Version 4, which includes proposed implementation details to address the Board's Nairobi resolutions concerning the topic of vertical integration. Excerpts of version 4 of the Guidebook related to the topic of vertical integration between Registrars and Registries are provided in **Annex G** of this Report.

2.3 Objectives of the VI PDP Working Group.

The objectives of the VI Working Group are included in the Charter described in **Annex H** of this Report. The Preamble to the Charter notes that the working group expects to define the range of restrictions on vertical separation that are currently in effect, to serve as a baseline to evaluate future proposals. The Charter also included five separate objectives to guide the VI Working Group in its deliberations, and timelines for milestones for the Working Group to complete its work and produce any recommendations supported by a consensus on an expedited basis.

3. Approach Taken by the VI Working Group

Mike O'Connor and Roberto Gaetano were selected to serve as Co-Chairs of the VI Working Group. The VI Working Group consisted of approximately 75 individuals, (the largest working group of recent times) representing a broad range of stakeholders, and reflecting the significant interest in the ICANN Community in this issue. **Annex D** identifies the members of the VI Working Group and includes additional information on their participation in the conference calls scheduled in an effort to produce consensus recommendations in a short period of time.

After its initial meetings, the VI Working Group concluded that it was not possible to work on all of the Charter objectives in the expedited timeframe requested by the GNSO Council. As a result, the Co-Chairs divided the work into two phases, with the first phase dedicated to determining whether a consensus recommendation can be developed in time to affect the final Applicant Guidebook. The second phase of work is expected to focus on developing long term recommendations that could apply to both new gTLD registries and existing gTLD registries, and would also address any remaining Charter Objectives.

As specified in the Charter, Staff produced an initial set of definitions to assist the VI Working Group in its deliberations. These proposed definitions are attached as **Annex I** to this Report.

4. Key Principles Developed by the VI Working Group

It is impossible to know or completely understand all potential business models that may be represented by new gTLD applicants. That fact has created a challenge to finding consensus on policy that defines clear, bright-line rules for allowing vertical integration and a compliance framework to support it, while ensuring that such policy is practical and beneficial in the public interest. However, there is general acceptance within the Working Group for the following principles:

1. Certain new gTLDs likely to be applied for in the first round may be unnecessarily impacted by restrictions on cross-ownership or control between registrar and registry.
2. There is need for a process that would allow applicants to request exceptions and have them considered on a case-by-case basis. The proposed reasons for exceptions, and the conditions under which exceptions would be allowed, vary widely in the group.
3. The concept of Single Registrant, Single User TLDs should be explored further.
4. There will exist need for enhanced compliance efforts and the need for a detailed compliance plan in relation to the new gTLD program in general.

The Working Group came to this understanding relatively recently. Several sub-groups have developed preliminary drafts around these topics and those drafts are included in Annex A – Preliminary Drafts of Principles. The Working Group intends to continue discussion of these drafts during the public-comment period and is very interested in suggestions from the broader community.

5. Major Proposals debated within the VI Working Group

The VI Working Group solicited proposals addressing vertical integration models for adoption in the New gTLD program. The proponents of these proposals presented their models and debated the relative merits of each.

Despite many hours of face-to-face meetings, telephone conference calls, and over 3,000 emails generated in a five month period, no consensus has been reached on a proposed model on vertical integration and cross-ownership.

The proposals submitted to the VI Working Group that have garnered minimal levels of support and are actively under consideration are summarized here and included in **Annex B** to this Revised Initial Report. These proposals are included in this Revised Initial Report to reflect the current status of the efforts of the VI Working Group. Comments submitted in the public comment forum will be reviewed by the VI Working Group as it continues its deliberations and attempts to identify one or more proposed solutions to be included in its Final Report to the GNSO Council.

The Working Group conducted several polls on the proposals (sometimes referred to as “molecules” by the Co-Chairs), and their component features (or “atoms”) to identify levels of consensus among the members of the VI Working Group. Listed below are the results of the latest poll taken before the release of the Initial Report, followed by brief summaries of each proposal, drafted by the working group members.

Proposal Name	In Favor	Could Live With	Opposed	No Opinion	Did not vote
JN2	12	11	16	2	26
Free Trade	16	4	20	1	26
RACK+	12	3	23	2	27
CAM3	2	12	24	2	27
DAGv4	0	11	27	2	27
IPC	1	5	29	5	27

JN2 Proposal Summary

The JN2 Proposal is intended to permit cross ownership between registries and registrars, as long as cross-owned entities are not in a position of controlling the other or possessing a greater than 15% ownership interest in the other. The JN2 proposal contains definitions of affiliation, which include both ownership (> 15%) and control (direct or indirect) and allows exceptions for single registrant TLDs, community TLDs and Orphan TLDs.

- It restricts Registry Operators and their affiliates from distributing names within the TLD for which Registry Operator or its affiliate serves as the Registry Operator.
- It allows registrars (and their affiliates) to be Registry Operators provided they agree to not distribute names within a TLD for which they or their affiliates serve as the Registry Operator.
- Restrictions do not apply to back-end registry service providers (RSPs) that do not control the policies, pricing or selection of registrars.
- After 18 months, any restricted RSP may petition ICANN for a relaxation of those restrictions depending on a number of factors.
- Cross ownership limitations extend to registrar resellers for 18 months. After that, market protections mechanisms must be in place.
- Registry Operators may select registrars based on objective criteria and may not discriminate among the ones they select.

Free Trade Proposal Summary

The Free Trade Model proposes that limits on cross ownership (CO) and Vertical Integration (VI) are discarded.

Highlights of the Free Trade Proposal are as follows:

- No CO or VI restrictions on Registrars, Registries, or Registry Service Providers (RSPs).
- Equivalent access for Registrars is required with Registries allowed to self distribute so long as they are bound by the RAA and pay required registration fees.
- Registry Service Providers (RSPs) shall be required to be accredited by ICANN for technical sufficiency. RSPs shall also be bound by the similar terms, conditions, and restrictions imposed on Registry Operators through their contractual agreement with each Registry Operator.
- This model removes the need for exceptions like Single Registrant – Single User (SRSU), Single Registrant – Multiple Users (SRMU), & Orphan TLDs.
- This proposal assumes ICANN’s funding of contractual compliance resources will match the demands of the new gTLD expansion. Requirements to monitor, enforce and ultimately prevent malicious or abusive conduct will be directed at the conduct at issue rather than through cross ownership limitations.

RACK+ Proposal Summary

This proposal recommends the continuation of ICANN’s current policy of separation between registries and registrars.

Cross Ownership

- ICANN should permit cross ownership, both by a registry operator in a registrar and by a registrar in a registry operator, up to 15%. This cross ownership approach allows both registry operators and registrars to invest in domain name wholesale and retail businesses. The rationale is to avoid creating ownership positions that provide access to registry data for registrars.
- ICANN should permit cross ownership, both by a registry backend service provider in a registrar and by a registrar in a registry backend service provider, up to 15%. This group does not recommend that a new contract regime be established between ICANN and registry backend services providers. Rather, ICANN could enforce this cross ownership rule through the registry operator contract.

Affiliate and Control

Cross ownership caps should be supported by appropriate provisions addressing “affiliate” and “control” to prevent gaming against the caps.

GNSO Recommendation 19

Registries must use only ICANN accredited registrars in registering domain names and may not discriminate among such accredited registrars.

Equivalent Access and Non-Discrimination

Equivalent access and non-discrimination principles should apply to all TLD distribution.

Competition Authority Model (CAMv3) Proposal Summary

The Competition Authority Model CAMv3 allows referral to national competition authorities to resolve questions about market power and consumer protection. It prohibits cross ownership between registry and registrar as originally set forth in the ICANN Board Nairobi resolution, but allows up to 100% cross ownership and full vertical integration under the rules of a waiver/exemption process.

- Those entities that wish may request an exemption/waiver. These would be forwarded to a standing panel entitled the Competition/Consumer Evaluation Standing Panel (CESP). This panel would be given a set of guidelines for evaluating the applications. If the CESP “quick look” or initial analysis raised no competition or consumer protection concerns, the exemption/waiver would be granted.

If the CESP initial analysis raises competition or consumer protection concerns or indicates a need for a more detailed or extended then ICANN shall refer the matter to the appropriate national competition and/or consumer protection agencies.

- For those entities that are granted a waiver/exemption, a suitable set or pre-determined restrictions/safeguards will be placed into the registration authority agreement to prevent self dealing or harm to third parties such as registrants and Internet users.
- The CAM proposal proposes a three tiered approach toward contractual compliance. The first being ICANN’s normal compliance efforts. The second being an annual audit. The third being an expanded Post Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure (PDDRP) for third parties to initiate their own administrative remedy against a registration authorities non-compliance, coupled with a strict three strikes rule for repeat offenders.

DAGv4 Summary

The following represents the Working Group's best interpretation of the DAG4 language. Its interpretation has not been vetted through ICANN staff or the ICANN Board and therefore does not represent an authoritative interpretation of what was intended by ICANN staff or the ICANN Board and should not be relied upon by any potential new gTLD applicant. Nor do all individual members of the Working Group necessarily endorse this interpretation. All questions and comments related to the DAG4 language should be directed to ICANN staff and not the Working Group.

- A registrar entity or their Affiliate (another company with whom the registrar has common Control) may not directly hold a registry contract. This applies regardless of the TLD(s) in which the registrar is accredited.
- A registrar entity or their Affiliate may have Beneficial Ownership of up to 2% of the shares in a registry company. Beneficial Ownership is a form of ownership in which shares have (a) voting power, which includes the power to vote, or to direct the voting of the shares; and/or (B) investment power which includes the power to dispose, or to direct the disposition of the shares.
- In no circumstance may a registry entity Control a registrar or its Affiliates, or vice versa.
- Affiliates of the registry entity may not distribute names in any TLD -- as either a registrar, reseller or other form of domain distributor
- No registrar, reseller or other form of domain distributor (or their Affiliates) may provide Registry Services to a registry entity. Registry Services are defined in Specification 6 to the registry contract.
- Names can only be registered through registrars
- Registries can set accreditation criteria for registrars that are reasonably related to the purpose of the TLD (e.g. a Polish language TLD could require registrars to offer the domain via a Polish language interface).

- Participating registrars must be treated on a non-discriminatory basis
- Registries can register names to themselves through an ICANN-Accredited Registrar

IPC Proposal Summary

The IPC proposed three models of .brand exceptions. Under the .brand SRSU, the .brand Registry Operator (“bRO”) is the registrant and user of all second-level domain names. Wholly-owned subsidiaries and otherwise affiliated companies could register and use second-level names. Under the .brand SRMU, the bRO is the registrant for all second-level names and may license them to third parties that have a pre-existing relationship with the brand owner (e.g., suppliers) for other goods/services. Under the .brand MRMU, the bRO and its trademark licensees are the registrants and users of all second-level names.

Seven additional criteria for these .brand exceptions apply including, inter alia, (1) the trademark must be identical to the .brand string and the subject of registrations of national effect in at least three countries in three ICANN regions; (2) trademark owners whose principal business is to operate a domain name registry, register domain names, or resell domain names are ineligible; (3) under MRMU, the bRO delegates second-level names subject to trademark license agreement quality control provisions that allow at-will termination of registrations; and (4) .brand TLDs with second-level names registered to unrelated third parties are ineligible.

A new gTLD registry that satisfied a model and criteria (a) could control an ICANN-accredited registrar solely for registrations in that TLD; (b) did not need to use an ICANN-accredited registrar for registrations within the TLD; and/or (c) could enter into arrangements with a limited number of ICANN-accredited registrars for registrations in that TLD.

6. Conclusions and Next Steps

While the VI Working Group is unable to identify a consensus recommendation at this time, many members believe that a consensus is still achievable and that the bottom-up policy development process should continue to proceed. The principles described in Section 4 and the proposals described in Section 5 are included in this Revised Initial Report to reflect the current status of the efforts of the VI Working Group. Comments submitted in the public comment forum will be reviewed by the VI Working Group as it continues its deliberations and attempts to identify one or more proposed solutions to be included in its Final Report to the GNSO Council.

Under its expedited deliverables schedule, the VI Working Group has published this Revised Initial Report to the GNSO Council to enable the GNSO Council to evaluate its contents at its 26 August, 2010 meeting.

ANNEX A - Preliminary Drafts of Principles

Compliance and Enforcement

(Preliminary Draft – for discussion purposes only)

The VI Working Group is deeply divided on a number of issues with regard to the issues surrounding vertical Integration and cross-ownership, including the role of ICANN’s activities in the areas of compliance and enforcement with regard to the eventual policy that may be adopted by ICANN. Some members feel that loosening vertical integration/ownership controls may let the proverbial “genie out of the bottle that can’t be put back” should competitive harms result in the marketplace. Others believe that adopting restrictions on vertical integration or cross ownership is the wrong approach altogether, and that the focus should be on protecting against harms, and providing sanctions where harms take place. Where there seems to be agreement is in the notion that an effective Compliance function is needed -- to increase confidence that harmful behavior will be quickly identified and stopped, and to provide better information upon which to base policy in the future. Described below is a preliminary draft of what might be needed in order to reduce those fears and provide the facts necessary for an effective Compliance function.

Introduction

The Vertical Integration Working Group (VIWG) created a Compliance and Enforcement sub team to draft an outline about compliance and enforcement issues that may be germane to the newTLD round. Since there is no consensus position on vertical integration, a specific compliance and enforcement regime cannot be articulated at this time. However, elements of a compliance and enforcement regime can be identified to assist the ICANN Board in assessing risk and resource allocation depending on the final recommendation regarding vertical integration in the newTLD round.

Regardless of the respective points-of-view concerning vertical integration, a significant number of VIWG members have expressed their belief that Compliance and Enforcement is a

high priority. Some also noted that ICANN's Board and executive staff may not be giving the compliance function an appropriate level of strategic attention, resources or authority. This in turn raises serious concerns about ICANN's ability capability to develop, staff and make operationally effective an enforcement bureau function that would be necessary to monitor and enforce against harms or violations of rules developed by the VIWG.

While it is recognized that the level of compliance and enforcement could vary depending on the VI regime adopted (e.g. ownership caps and structural separation v. no ownership caps and full integration), it is recognized that ICANN is at the starting point of developing the necessary resources and functions. Writing rules, creating the necessary plans, obtaining the necessary resources, hiring qualified employees, training, establishing operational systems and having an effective program at the time newTLDs launch is not a trivial task. Moreover, the timeliness of detection and intervention is critical to preventing consumer and competitive harms identified in the VIWG. ICANN has taken a "reactive" approach to compliance and enforcement in the past – an inclination that is worrisome to advocates of a strong and effective compliance and enforcement program. A firm corporate commitment to compliance combined with the establishment of a genuine "culture of compliance" across all stakeholders in the community is absolutely necessary if ICANN is to devise and operate an effective enforcement bureau.

Outline of a Possible Compliance and Enforcement Program

The starting point in developing a compliance and enforcement regime is to identify the rules that are to be enforced. The rules can take a variety of forms including, among others:

- 1) mandates;
- 2) prohibitions or restrictions;
- 3) permitted, yet circumscribed behavior;

4) permitted behavior, if threshold requirements have been met.

It should be noted that, unlike a governmental agency, ICANN is a not-for-profit California corporation whose relationship with registries and registrars is based on contract. ICANN does not have certain governmental powers (e.g. subpoena power) to utilize in a compliance and enforcement program.

A critical element in building a compliance and enforcement program is timing. An enforcement and compliance program that targets specific behaviors or acts must be properly resourced and operationally effective at the time such behaviors or acts are likely to manifest themselves in the market. In the case of newTLDs potentially anti-competitive or consumer abuse behaviors (in fact a significant percentage) can be anticipated during the launch phase of newTLDs. An Enforcement Bureau and compliance program that relies only on third party surveillance or competitors reporting instances of abusive practices may not be timely for purposes of enforcement.

The Compliance drafting team has developed the following preliminary list of possible components of an effective compliance and enforcement program that will be considered during subsequent discussions by the full Working Group as it develops its final report.

Compliance

- Risk analysis - a risk analysis of anti-competitive practices and consumer abuse practices must be undertaken
- Geographic scope – given the global nature of the DNS, compliance and enforcement would be expected to be global in scope and reach. The same rules must apply for all applicants independent of location.
- Formal written compliance program – a compliance program must be formalized in writing; for a compliance program to be effective it must be: clear; communicated; corrective; and compelling (will be followed)

- Companies (or actors) subject to the compliance and enforcement program must make a clear designation of responsible officers
- Senior Management Involvement/Commitment to Compliance – Senior Management must be accountable and responsible for violations; compliance should be a corporate value
- Bottom-up compliance – training of employees is critical to establishing bottom-up compliance
- Screening – active screening/sampling for potential problems
- Recordkeeping requirements – covering data handling and transactions
- Internal reporting systems – opens a dialogue between management and employees
- Chinese walls – effective Chinese walls designed to prevent sharing of sensitive registry data with ongoing verification tools
- Documented Training along pre-established Training outlines
- Random Audits
- Remedial actions – corrective action; internal disciplinary action
- Advice line – resource for companies/actors attempting to institute and maintain compliance

Enforcement

- Monitoring and Detection
 - use of data and information systems to identify trends
 - random compliance audit checks (sampling)
 - prioritizing investigations and promote efficient use of resources
 - system for “public assistance” in monitoring and detection
 - voluntary disclosures – opportunity and process to self-report violations to mitigate penalties
- Investigation and Collection of Evidence
- Standards of Proof

- Penalties
- Mitigating and Aggravating Factors
- Deterrence: Penalty system that encourages compliance and removes incentives for non-compliance.
- Resources – human (e.g. investigators; attorneys; auditors); data systems; document collection and handling

It should be noted that the Working Group will need to consider several framing topics during subsequent refinement of this list:

- Harms that will be addressed/prevented by the program
- Feasibility and cost-impact for both ICANN and new registries
- The appropriate role for ICANN in implementation and delivery

In developing a compliance and enforcement program, ICANN's past history and present structure and resources must be taken into account. A uniquely "reactive" approach to compliance and enforcement will not sufficiently serve the purposes of a new compliance and enforcement regime for the newTLD round. Based on public skepticism of historic enforcement challenges, a new compliance and enforcement program should be in place, properly financed and staffed and operationally effective prior to changes that would open the door to potential anti-competitive conduct and abusive practices. ICANN's staffing requirements, internal structure, reporting lines (senior management responsibility; report to the CEO) and oversight (who will watch the "watchers") are important issues that would need to be addressed and formalized to create a new, proactive as well as reactive "culture" of compliance and enforcement.

Concerns have been raised that a Compliance and Enforcement program not inhibit competition by smaller providers or place "big company" compliance requirements that may be unworkable for smaller providers. Concerns have also been noted that rules not be unduly complex or place too significant on ICANN's staff and resources so that ICANN always "playing

catch up.” Finally, some members of the working-group note that the VIWG need not have a consensus position on VI to address current state or future state innovative proposals. Also that gaming and harms can occur outside of cross ownership but that, in any event, stricter compliance should be required.

Exceptions Procedure

(Preliminary Draft – for discussion purposes only)

It is impossible to know or completely understand all potential business models that may be represented by new gTLD applicants. That fact has been an obstacle to finding consensus on policy that defines clear, bright line rules for allowing vertical integration and a compliance framework to support it while ensuring that such policy is practical and beneficial in the public interest.

However, it is recognized that certain new gTLDs likely to be applied for in the first round will be unnecessarily impacted by restrictions on cross-ownership or control between registrar and registry in the event ICANN adopts a requirement of strict separation between registrars and registries¹⁰.

During discussions there seemed to be general acceptance of the need for a process that would allow applicants to request exceptions and be considered on a case by case basis. The reasons for exceptions and the conditions under which exceptions would be allowed, varied widely in the group, but there did seem to be a general acceptance of the need for the following:

- Possible exceptions based on certain public interest needs where those needs would not otherwise be addressed (certain language groups, developing countries, certain communities due to size or economic conditions, etc.).
- In cases where the facts of competitive disadvantage cannot be established until after operations are begun (e.g., “orphan” registries), the exception may be requested and

¹⁰ Note: this proposal does not presuppose any specific control or cross-ownership thresholds but rather deals with the case of exceptions to that threshold policy. The issue of specific control or cross-ownership thresholds are is dealt with elsewhere in the VIWG reporting.

granted, but only exercised when defined circumstances are met (e.g. insufficient registrar support).

- That there needed to be an agreed upon list of circumstances defining the cases where the granting of an exception would be allowed.
- That an external review panel would be responsible for reviewing applications for exception.
- That the Vertical Integration Policy Development Process should provide a set of guidelines for an external review panel.
- There should be no additional cost to the applicant for requesting the exception or for being evaluated for it. The evaluation would take place at an appropriate point following the Initial Evaluation. If the request is denied, the applicant may withdraw and receive the appropriate pro-rated refund.

It was also accepted that if there is consensus on these five bullets then they could be recommended to the GNSO Council and that the VIWG would continue to discuss the elements on the exception list, the nature of the review panel, and the guidelines that would be provided to that external review panel while the public comment period and other PDP follow-up processes were ongoing. The public comment could specifically request comments on the elements of the exceptions lists and other elements related to an exceptions policy. These comments would then be considered by the VIWG and, if appropriate, folded into the recommendation on the details of the exception policy and sent to the council for review and approval. A specific VIWG charter extension for this work would be recommended to the GNSO Council.

Examples of the kind of criteria for exception that will be discussed as the VIWG continues its work include but are not limited to:

- Where the registry cannot find unaffiliated registrars to offer its gTLD to the public.

- Where the gTLD caters primarily to a specific language group, and where the registry cannot find unaffiliated registrars who will offer its gTLD in an order process in that language.
- The applicant may define criteria reasonably related to the purpose of its gTLD as conditions for Accredited Registrar participation, but may not otherwise discriminate or restrict Accredited Registrar access.

Special Consideration for a Single Registrant, Single User (SRSU) Exception.

(Preliminary Draft – for discussion purposes only)

The VI Working Group discussed several specific exceptions to prohibitions on vertical integration and cross-ownership. One such proposed exception is for single-registrant, single-user registries (SRSU). Under the proposed SRSU exception, the registry itself is both the only registrant and the only user of second-level names, and cannot transfer second-level names to third parties independent of any transfer or sale of the TLD itself. Within the VI Working Group, there was a general endorsement of the idea of an SRSU exception. However, support of specific types of SRSUs varies depending on the type of SRSU and how the exception would be sought and granted.

Types of SRSU exceptions. As discussed further below, several types of SRSUs were proposed in the public comments by constituencies and stakeholder groups (specifically the IPC and the NCSG), as well as WG members.

- Some proposed an SRSU and SRMU¹¹ exception for a registry for which the gTLD string is an identical match to the registry's trademark/service mark (a ".brand" registry) and that satisfied additional criteria that the constituency intended to limit the applicability of the exceptions and to discourage abuse and gaming of the exceptions.
- Several WG participants proposed a Single Registrant exception for non-governmental organization registries (NGOs) (referred to as .ngo registry) in cases where a specific membership organization could be identified and the string

¹¹ Although the Working Group also initially discussed a single-registrant, multiple-user (SRMU) subcategory, there was substantial opposition due to its complexity. Instead, the working group focused on a Single Registrant Single User Exception. Accordingly, only SRSU is identified in the main body of the report.

corresponded to the NGO's name, and also proposed a similar exception for cultural, linguistic or non profit organizations.

- Still other proposals proposed an SRSU exception where the only user of the second-level names is the registry itself, its employees, agents and subcontractors. The registry would exercise control over the use of the names in website content, email, or any other application associated with the domains, regardless of whether the registry is a .brand or .ngo.
- Some members believe that it may already possible to satisfy the needs of the SRSU model via the use of reserved names as defined in the current registry contract, although this could greatly reduce flexibility as it may require that the registry specify all of the names it wants in advance. One approach might be to explore a clarifying amendment to Section 2.6 of the current registry contract that could explicitly address the SR model and could also allow registries to add to their schedule of reserved names in a timely manner.

Proponents of the concept of an SRSU exception contend that the exception, along with relevant type-specific restrictions, will preclude any harms attributed to vertical integration and cross ownership for these types of entities and facilitate their participation in the introduction of new gTLDs.

Critics note that the SRSU exception, in its current form, has no consistency of interpretation and creates a danger of undermining the main registry-registrar structures being proposed by many in the VI WG. For example, critics are concerned that SRSU domain names (second level) might be handed out to third parties for widespread public use. Given that well-known names (both for-profit and not-for-profit) are likely to be given only to their trademark owners, and given the strong need to develop details and compliance/enforcement models, those concerned WG members felt that SRSU should not be part of the first round of new gTLDs, but rather that the community should work for definition, consensus and introduction in a later round.

ANNEX B - Major Proposals

The following proposals emerged as the “finalists” reviewed by the VI Working Group during its deliberations.

Proposal Name	In Favor	Could Live With	Opposed	No Opinion	Did not vote
JN2	12	11	16	2	26
Free Trade	16	4	20	1	26
RACK+	12	3	23	2	27
CAM3	2	12	24	2	27
DAGv4	0	11	27	2	27
IPC	1	5	29	5	27

JN2 Proposal

1. Definitions

- i. “Affiliate” shall mean a specified person or entity that directly or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls or is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified.
 - ii. “Control” (including the terms “controlling”, “controlled by” and “under common control with”) shall mean the possession, direct or indirect, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of voting or debt securities, by contract, or otherwise. As used in this definition, the term “control” means the possession of beneficial ownership of more than fifteen percent (15%) of the equity interests or more than fifteen (15%) of the interests entitled to vote for the election of, or serve as, the board of directors or similar managing authority of the entity.
2. Registry Operator or its Affiliate may serve as an ICANN-Accredited Registrar in any top-level domain other than the TLD for which Registry Operator or its Affiliate serves as the Registry Operator.
 3. Except as set forth in Section 4 below, Registry Operator may not be Affiliates with an ICANN-Accredited Registrar distributing names in the TLD.
 4. For the first 18 months of the New TLD program, ICANN only may approve a greater than 15% interest (or control) in three cases:

- i. Single Registrant TLD -- use must be limited to registrant entity, its employees, and its agents -- no other third parties
- ii. Community Applicant – Registry Operator or its Affiliates must only maintain up to 30,000 domain name registrations in the TLD.
- iii. Orphan Registry Operator -- Registry Operator must make good faith showing that it attempted and failed to get traction in registrar marketplace, and Registry Operator or its Affiliates must only maintain up to 30,000 names without demonstration that it again made good faith efforts to attempt -- and failed -- to get traction in the registrar marketplace. In order to maintain this exception, the Orphan Registry Operator must demonstrate on an annual basis that it made good faith efforts to attempt – and failed – to get traction in the registrar marketplace. No change of control shall be allowed of an Orphan TLD absent ICANN approval. In the event ICANN approves change of control by an ICANN-Accredited Registrar, they lose orphan TLD status.

ICANN may consult with relevant competition authority at its discretion when reviewing any of these requests for approval. In so doing, ICANN should use a "public interest" standard.

5. After the first 18 months, ICANN may amend the criteria for its approval of a greater interest only with consensus approval of the community. ICANN also may consult with relevant competition authorities at its discretion or at the request of the applicant when reviewing a specific request for approval.
6. Use of Registrars/Discrimination -- Registry Operator must use only ICANN-accredited registrars in registering domain names, provided that Registry Operator shall have the

flexibility to determine eligibility criteria for Registrars in its TLD; such criteria shall be applied equally to all ICANN-Accredited Registrars; such criteria are reasonably related to the purpose of the TLD; and the Registry Operator may not discriminate among the registrars it selects.

7. Back-end Registry Operators -- these requirements to be added to the Registry Operator Agreement

- i. Back-end registry service providers are bound by the same rules as the Registry Operators if they (a) are Affiliates with Registry Operator, or (b) otherwise control the pricing, policies, or selection of registrars for that TLD.
- ii. Back-end registry service providers that are not Affiliates with Registry Operator or don't otherwise control the pricing, policies, or registrar selection may be affiliated with an ICANN-Accredited Registrar only if the affiliated registrar operations are kept separate from the operations of the registry service provider; the affiliated registrar does not receive preferential treatment in pricing or any other way; strict controls are in place to prevent registry data and other confidential information from being shared with affiliated registrar; annual independent audits are required; and a sanctions program is established.

8. Registrar Resellers -- these requirements to be added to the Registry Operator Agreement:

- i. Restriction on Registry Operators or its Affiliates from serving as or controlling an ICANN-accredited registrar extends to registrar resellers for the first 18 months of a Registry Operator's existence. If an exception has been granted under Section 3, then those exceptions shall equally apply to this restriction.

- ii. After 18 months, Registry Operators may distribute domains as a registrar "reseller" as long as the ICANN-Accredited registrar that it distributes through is not affiliated with Registry Operator; the operations of the affiliated registrar reseller are kept separate from the operations of the Registry Operator; the affiliated registrar reseller does not receive preferential treatment in pricing or any other way; strict controls are in place to prevent registry data and other confidential information from being shared with affiliated registrar reseller; annual independent audits are required; and a sanctions program is established.

Free Trade Proposal

1. LIMITS DO NOT APPLY ACROSS TLDS

In the Free Trade model for the coming round, there are no limits to Cross Ownership (CO) & Functional Control for new TLDS that distribute domains with equivalent access. The issues discussed around this concept have very little to do with percent ownership and more to do with the abuse and harms of having integrated control of data. Setting random percent ownership limits does nothing to mitigate harms and abuse. Such abuse examples are Discrimination, Insider trading, Domain registration abuse, Domain tasting, Front-running, Predatory pricing, Account lock-ins, Transfer-out pricing, reduced product variety. No harms have been shown to have occurred unmanageably to date, in any namespace, due to lack of VI/CO restrictions. Any alleged harms, if any, occur roughly equally across DNS, regardless of any such restrictions, if any. Whether the Registry (Ry) operates in self distribution model or a co-distribution model with “equal access” to all ICANN- accredited registrars, the concept of market power is essential when conducting the risk analysis and policy development of allowable models.

In the new TLD space, and indeed the existing gTLDs (perhaps other than .com/net/org), there is no justification for any restrictions on vertical integration, cross-ownership, or the requirement of any or equal access to registrars. On the other hand, there is much likely benefit from avoiding or eliminating those restrictions. All other models foster the demand for exceptions in addition to the issue of harms and abuse. Therefore no such restrictions or requirements should be imposed upon new TLD registry operators. Of course, registrars will continue to be widely used by consumers to register new gTLD domains, to that extent the registrars must be ICANN-accredited to offer gTLD names. Registries who sell direct must also agree to the RAA and pay registrar fees to ICANN.

Registrars will still be able sell most new gTLDs and charge fees based on their business model, but the ability to buy direct from a registry is certainly in consumer best interests to keep registration fees lower. ICANN assumes that the new TLD launch is in consumers' best interest, in order to expand consumer choice among domain names and in order to encourage DNS innovation, so it is logical that ICANN should enable new entrants to the gTLD market as much as possible. Thus the ability for new registries to sell direct, and to control their own distribution channel outside of ICANN's traditional model, is certainly in consumer's best interests.

2. CONTROL/OWNERSHIP

No ownership limits. 100% Cross Ownership and complete Vertical integration is allowed.

3. OWNERSHIP LIMITS

No ownership limits. 100% Cross Ownership and complete Vertical integration is allowed.

4. EXCEPTIONS

The Free Trade model removes the need for exceptions like Single Registrant – Single User (SRSU), Single Registrant – Multiple Users (SRMU), & Orphan TLDs.

5. REGISTRY SERVICE PROVIDERS

New gTLD Registry Operators should be free to contract with Registry Service Providers (RSP) regardless of ownership, so long as the obligations of the Registry contract are fulfilled.

6. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

To the extent that any harms are actually caused by violation of CO or VI restrictions today, it is because existing rules have not been clear enough and/or have not been enforced fully enough. Clarity in the rules would greatly benefit new TLD operators, Regardless of the rules that are devised, if any, ICANN's funding of contractual compliance resources and expertise must match

the demands of the new gTLD expansion.

Questions:

What is the best way to prevent gaming in a cross-owned entity -- percentage ownership caps, restrictions on control, both or something else?

Percentage ownership caps become irrelevant with respect to gaming if Functional Control is allowed and compliance to address violations is established. Gaming is primarily a function of the Vertical Integration debate rather than the concept of Cross Ownership. Therefore to mitigate gaming of new TLDs, the community must identify the ways these forms of abuse stemming from Functional Control can affect the market and establish a compliance framework that defines the thresholds, monitors for breach, and enforces penalties for violations.

Do the benefits of increased competition (registrars becoming registries or back-end service providers) outweigh the potential risks of gaming from a cross-owned entity, or vice-versa?

Yes. The potential risks of gaming, if any, can be addressed by compliance, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms.

Common ownership Should a registry be able to own a registrar, and vice versa, provided it doesn't distribute its own TLD?

Yes, and should be able to distribute its own TLD.

What is an acceptable level of cross-ownership (0 - 100%) if self-distribution is permitted?

0-100%

What is an acceptable level of cross-ownership (0 - 100%) if self-distribution is prohibited?

0-100%

Should a registry be able to control a registrar, and vice versa, provided it doesn't distribute its own TLD?

Yes, and should be able to distribute its own TLD with the equivalent access model
Absent an arbitrary restriction on percentage of cross-ownership, what constitutes control?

The functional control of Registrar data and operations of the TLDs in which they operate.

What restrictions should be put in place to prevent control? Do these vary if self-distribution is prohibited?

Functional control should not be prevented, but any abuses and gaming that are alleged as likely to result from control should be researched and contractually defined in a manner that removes the incentive or contains consequence.

Enforcement and Compliance

Is ICANN capable of enforcing contract compliance to prevent gaming in a cross-owned entity?

To the extent we understand the alleged harms, and how the marketplace has adequately addressed those harms to date in TLDs that have no VI/CO restrictions, the answer is yes. Any rules can be “gamed” by someone’s definition of gaming. Eliminating CO/VI rules will result in less need for compliance as to corporate formalities, which are generally irrelevant to issues of abuse. Thus elimination of CO/VI rules will allow more compliance resources to focus on combating actual DNS abuses that affect internet users.

Scope

Should the scope of ICANN contracts be increased?

No, Back-end Registry Service Providers (RSPs) shall be required to be accredited by ICANN for technical sufficiency. It is expected that RSPs shall also be bound by the similar terms, conditions, and restrictions imposed on Registry Operators through their contractual agreement with each Registry Operator.

Existing ICANN contracts may require a few adjustments based on implementation.

Specifically, should Registry Service Providers be required to enter into contracts with ICANN?

No, Back-end Registry Service Providers (RSPs) shall be required to be accredited by ICANN for technical sufficiency. It is expected that RSPs shall also be bound by the similar terms, conditions, and restrictions imposed on Registry Operators through their contractual agreement with each Registry Operator.

Should other entities (e.g. Resellers) also be required to enter into contracts with ICANN?

No, not at this time.

Exceptions to cross-ownership and self-distribution restrictions Permitted for Single-Registrant, Single-User (SRSU) TLDs?

Not applicable with the Free Trade model

Permitted for "orphaned" TLDs that can't get registrar distribution?

Not applicable with the Free Trade model

Permitted for "community" TLDs?

Not applicable with the Free Trade model

Should there be numeric caps for any or all of these?

Not applicable with the Free Trade model

Interim solution

Should the results of this first-phase VI-WG PDP be limited to the first round of new TLDs only?

No. This PDP will either create a Policy and or the ICANN Board will make decision with respect to the Vertical Integration and Cross Ownership model. Said model will evolve up through to any subsequent TLD round only modified or terminated by subsequent PDPs.

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Vertical Integration Proposal – RACK+

The undersigned support the following proposal for vertical integration rules in the newTLD round. Having participated in the Vertical Integration PDP Working Group, the undersigned note the complexity of the issues concerning proposed vertical integration and underscore the good faith efforts by the participants in the PDP Working Group to deliver a consensus based proposal for consideration by the GNSO Council and, ultimately, the Board.

This proposal is designed to preserve the separation of registries and registrars which protects registrants with more robust competition and a system in which all registrars, small and large, from all regions of the world, benefit from equivalent access and non discrimination for domain name registrations. An overarching concern that informs this proposal is the prospect of gaming and the negative impact for registrants arising from the potential misuse of registry data. The proposal is intended to minimize the possibility of abuse of registry data through structural separation and to provide a framework that does not strain ICANN's enforcement resources or capabilities. Abuse of registry data will result in higher prices and unavailability of higher value domain names. Prevention of registry data abuse would be easier under this proposal than under proposals that rely on purported behavioral safeguards to prevent such abuse.

We acknowledge that the Working Group will continue to examine issues around vertical integration beyond the Brussels ICANN meeting until the mandate of the VI WG has been fully discharged.

We also take note of the levels of support the following items have garnered as reflected in the Vertical Integration Working Group proposal grid. In that spirit, the following vertical integration proposal has our full support:

PROPOSAL

Cross Ownership

1. ICANN should permit cross ownership, both by a registry operator in a registrar and by a registrar in a registry operator, up to 15%. This cross ownership approach allows both registry operators and registrars to invest in domain name wholesale and retail businesses thus stimulating growth in the industry. At the same time, the 15% ownership cap avoids creating ownership positions that provide incentives for registries and registrars alike to discriminate against unaffiliated competitors.
2. ICANN should permit cross ownership, both by a registry backend service provider in a registrar and by a registrar in a registry backend service provider, up to 15%. This cross ownership approach is recommended for the reasons stated in paragraph 1 above and to create an even playing field for all actors in the market. This group does not recommend that a new contract regime be established between ICANN and registry backend services providers. Rather, ICANN could enforce this cross ownership rule through the registry operator contract.

For these ownership caps to be meaningful and effective, rules concerning corporate control through other means and use of affiliates to subvert the ownership caps should be part of the new TLD contracts. See definitions of “Affiliate” and “Control.” Structural separation of registries and registrars, as set out above, will be easily and readily verifiable, and completely auditable. It will achieve the goal of separation of control so that registries and registrars are run separately, notwithstanding the very limited cross-ownership.

GNSO Recommendation 19

Registries must use only ICANN accredited registrars in registering domain names and may not discriminate among such accredited registrars.

Equivalent Access and Non-Discrimination

Equivalent access and non-discrimination principles should apply to all TLD distribution.

Definitions

Affiliate shall mean a specified person or entity that directly or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls or is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified.

Control (including the terms “controlling”, “controlled by” and “under common control with”) shall mean the possession, direct or indirect, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of voting or debt securities, by contract, contracts including debt and liquidity instruments or otherwise. As used in this definition, the term “control” means the possession of beneficial ownership of more than fifteen percent (15%) of the equity interests or more than fifteen (15%) of the interests entitled to vote for the election of, or serve as, the board of directors or similar managing authority of the entity.

Registry Operator is the entity that is a contracting party to the Registry Operator agreement with ICANN for the TLD in question.

Registrar is the entity that is a contracting party to the Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA) with ICANN that is authorized to register domain names.

Backend Registry Services Provider shall mean any entity performing any material registry services on behalf of the Registry Operator, including but not limited to shared-registrations-services, DNS, WHOIS or any other material Registry Services defined by the Registry Operator.

Registrar Reseller - restrictions on Registry Operators, Backend Registry Service Providers or their Affiliates from serving as or controlling an ICANN-accredited registrar extends to registrar resellers.

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**Joint Vertical Integration/Co-Ownership Proposal:
Competition Authority Model (CAM)¹²**

Problem Statement: ICANN is, we hope, on the verge of the greatest expanse of the domain name space since its creation in 1985. However, ICANN’s current legal framework was developed to open up a legacy monopoly that existed over a decade ago. That framework lacks the flexibility to promote increased innovation and choice in an increasingly competitive and fluid marketplace while still safeguarding consumers’ interests.

Objective: To break away from ICANN’s current one-size fits all contracting model, and to provide a framework that can both scale going forward and provide room for “innovative new business models that are very different from those of existing TLDs’ registry operators.¹³”

Proposed Solution

Registry Operator/Registrar Co-Ownership: Any request by a Registration Authority (Registry or Registrar), whether in the initial application or post delegation, seeking to acquire any ownership interest in a different type of Registration Authority¹⁴ would be subject to the following multi-step process. This process would apply to new gTLD applicants as well as existing Registration Authorities seeking an ownership interest in a different type of Registration Authority. For new gTLD application this process would be

¹² This proposal is based on the original MMA proposal, which represented a compromise between the professional opinions and viewpoints of the three original co-authors, Michael Palage, Milton Mueller and Avri Doria. That original compromise has been amended to reflect comments offered by the other members of the Vertical Integration WG.

¹³ See “An Economic Framework for the Analysis of the Expansion of Generic Top-Level Domain Names” Katz, Rosston, and Sullivan, Page 6.

¹⁴ “Different type of Registration Authority” is intended to be defined as a Registry seeking an ownership interest in a Registrar, or vice versa, It is not intended to encompass a Registration Authority acquiring an ownership interest in a similarly situated Registration Authority, e.g. this process is not intended to apply to a Registrar acquiring an interest in another Registrar, or a Registry in another Registry. It should also be noted that discussion of registration services in affiliated Registration authorities covered in the next section of this proposal

part of the initial and extended review process. For gTLDs that have already been delegated, the process would resemble the current Registry Service Technical Evaluation Panel (RSTEP) process.

Step #1

All applicants would be required to answer a series of pre-determined questions regarding the proposed interaction within the marketplace of the Registration Authorities, and series of other questions designed to reveal the market share and any potential market power or consumer harm of those Registration Authorities, either individually or combined, could exert on consumers (registrants and Internet users of domain names).¹⁵

Step #2

All applications would then be referred to an ICANN standing committee of international competition and consumer experts for a “quick look analysis.” This standing panel could be modelled after ICANN's existing Registry Service Technical Evaluation Panel (RSTEP). However, this Competition/Consumer Evaluation Standing Panel (CESP) would include economics, law, consumer protection and policy experts from each of the five ICANN geographical regions.¹⁶ The analysis by the CESP would be based upon the applicant's responses to the agreed upon questions.

If the CESP “quick look” or initial analysis raised no competition or consumer protection concerns, the processing on the new gTLD application would continue. In the case of an existing delegation, ICANN would approve the request.

Step #3

¹⁵ These questions could initially be drafted by experts in competition law, and then shared with the broader Internet community as part of a normal ICANN consultation period. These questions would then be forwarded by ICANN to the Government Advisory Committee (GAC) for referral to the appropriate competition authority within each country. Following standing international protocols, these national competition authorities would have six weeks to provide any feedback to ICANN.

¹⁶ Although the economic Panelists would be required to be internationally recognized experts in their field, the CESP could include non-economic experts with detailed market knowledge of the domain name marketplace to assist in the Panelists' evaluation. This option is designed to provide the economic experts with timely access to marketplace information that would otherwise have to be provided by ICANN staff.

If the CESP initial analysis raises competition or consumer protection concerns or indicates a need for a more detailed or extended analysis to properly evaluate the proposal, then ICANN shall refer the matter to the appropriate national competition and/or consumer protection agencies. The accompanying CESP report would describe the concerns and identify the appropriate competition and/or consumer protection authorities to which the case should be referred. This referral process is modelled after the process currently set forth in the Registry Services Evaluation Process (RESP). Unlike the RESP, however, which relies upon ICANN staff to make these referrals, the CESP is a much more qualified external review body to make these complex determinations.

Step #4

The appropriate national competition and/or consumer protection authorities would then have 45 days to review the referral to determine if it gives rise to any potential enforcement action. If the agency or agencies notify ICANN and the applicant during that 45 day period that the application may violate its competitions or consumer protection laws, ICANN will place the application on hold for another period not to exceed 60 days following the deadline that agency or agencies have established for the applicant to respond to any information requests for its investigation. At the end of this period, or sooner if notified by the agency or agencies that all issues have been resolved and unless concerns have been flagged for further review or action, ICANN will forward a new gTLD application for further processing, or approve the request for an existing delegation.

This process corresponds to a modified implementation of the Salop/Wright Option 2¹⁷. The hold period should have no negative impact on the processing of the application by ICANN during the Initial Evaluation. The hold would only come into play prior to contention set resolution in the case of multiple applicants for a single string, or prior to contractual approval if the string is not part of a contention set. Given that ICANN has scheduled five months for the Initial Evaluation of all gTLD applications, this should provide for more than

¹⁷ See <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/registry-registrar-separation-vertical-integration-options-salop-wright-28jan10-en.pdf>

sufficient time for the CESP and the competition agency or agencies to complete their respective reviews.

Registration by cross-owned Registry-Registrar: Registries and Registry Service Providers (RSP) would be permitted to provide domain name registration services for their TLD through an affiliated Registrar. This applies all forms of affiliation including cross-ownership or some other form of affiliation.

In order to mitigate against possible harm, the following rules would apply to all instances of a Registry or RSP providing domain name registration through an affiliated Registrar:

- a) In the event the Registry Operator/RSP controls¹⁸ pricing, policy or the selection of registrars for the TLD, then the restrictions applicable to the Registry Operator/RSP shall also be applicable to any of its Affiliates.
- b) In addition, in the event that Registry/RSP or any of its Affiliates is a Registrar for the TLD, the following restrictions shall apply:
 1. Affiliated Registrar may not receive directly or indirectly preferential pricing from Registry Operator (i.e., direct pricing, rebates, discounts, marketing contracts, etc.).
 2. RSP must have strict controls on use of data for any purpose other than acting as the RSP and must have information “firewall” between data in the registry and its Registrar Affiliate.

¹⁸ “Control” (including the terms “controlling”, “controlled by” and “under common control with”) shall mean the possession, direct or indirect, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of voting or debt securities, by contract, or otherwise.

3. No confidential information of the Registry Operator obtained by the RSP may be shared with registrar Affiliate of RSP except as necessary to perform the Registry Services and only for such purpose.
4. RSP shall not provide any access to any Registry Data to its Registrar Affiliate, and RSP itself will not use confidential user data or proprietary information of an-ICANN-accredited registrar served by Registry Operator, received by RSP in the course of providing Registry Services, except as necessary for registry management and operations.
5. In the case where an RSP has a Registrar Affiliate providing Registrar services in the TLD, such RSP will conduct internal neutrality reviews on a regular basis. In addition, it will agree to cooperate with an independent third party ("Auditor") performing Annual Independent Neutrality Audits ("AIN Audits"), to be conducted each calendar year. All costs of the AIN Audits will be borne by RSP. The AIN Audit is intended to determine whether Back-end Operator has been in compliance, and will utilize such tests and techniques, as the auditor deems appropriate to determine that compliance. The ICANN compliance department will be responsible for insuring that the proper audits are done each year, that their results are reviewed and that any corrective actions will be taken. The ICANN compliance department will publish a yearly report on the status of the ongoing audits.
6. Strict Penalties/Sanctions will be applied to any entity violating these policies, including monetary as well as temporary and potential

permanent prohibition of Affiliate Registrar providing domain name registrations services in the TLD, e.g. Three Strikes Program¹⁹

Vertical Integration and the use of ICANN Accredited Registrars: There shall continue to remain a presumption in favor of using ICANN accredited registrars in connection with domain name registration services. However, it is recognized that true innovation and choice within the domain name marketplace can sometimes only be achieved by permitting the Registry Operator to provide domain name registration services for its new gTLD, without the inefficiencies of that entity having to seek separate ICANN Accreditation as a Registrar.

This flexibility is most appropriate in connection with those gTLD business models without domain name portability, e.g. the domain names are assigned by the Registry Operator to the registrant in which registrants are prohibited from transferring their domain name to any other third party, i.e. to another registrant. This type of business model is highly likely in connection with certain brand-type gTLDs or membership organizations where the Registry Operator would be assigning names based upon an account number (.BANK) or membership name (.NGO). This corresponds to a Single Registrant Single User model where special criteria would be defined to identify organizations that would qualify for such services and would be exempt from the requirement on using ICANN accredited registrars. While this flexibility is most likely appropriate in connection with single registrant TLDs, there may also be the need for flexibility in connection with community TLDs, especially those that are cultural or linguistic based. Therefore, Registry Operators shall be permitted to provide domain name registration services in their new gTLDs if they agree to be legally provide registrants the safeguards set forth in the Registrar Accreditation Agreement

¹⁹ It is proposed that the first material violation would result in the Vertically Integrated / Co-Owned Registrar being prohibited for three months from “adding” any new domain names within the TLD; The second material violation would result in the Vertically Integrated / Co-Owned Registrar being prohibited for six months from “adding” or “renewing” any domain names within the TLD; a third material violation would result in a prohibition in that registrar providing any domain name registration services within that TLD.

(RAA)²⁰. In this model, the presumption in favor of using ICANN accredited registrars in connection with domain name registration services would be suspended for the first 50,000 domain name registrations at the second level, after which time, domain names at the second level could be registered or transferred to any ICANN accredited registrar. Criteria for Registrars as described below would pertain in this case.

Registry Operators shall also have the ability to set up criteria (access requirements) for Registrars in the TLD at its sole discretion; provided that such requirements are reasonably related to the purpose of the TLD and that Registry Operator shall additionally provide equivalent access requirements to all Registrars that meet the access requirements.

Potential criteria that ICANN's Vertical Integration Working Group may wish to consider in implementing this policy include:

For Single Registrant TLDs, the primary considerations in allowing vertical integration would be a) the domain names are assigned to employees, departments, and/or members of that organization, and b) the non-transferability of the domains.

For Community TLDs, especially cultural and linguistic, names would be available to a wider registrant base, and would be transferable. In this case, finding agreement on potential implementation criteria may be more complex. While the transferability of these names creates a strong presumption in favor of the traditional use of ICANN accredited registrars, a Registry Operator should still be permitted the opportunity to provide direct domain name registrations (in addition to ICANN accredited registrars) when such supply does not create excessive switching costs for users or create significant market power for the registry.

²⁰ This may be done initially by agreeing to the RAA, though it would be preferable for there to be a limited rider that could be appended to the registry agreement. Suggestions for creating a Registration Authority framework are discussed in the Legal Framework section of this proposal.

Enhanced Compliance Mechanisms: Concerns within the broader ICANN community about ICANN having the necessary resources to ensure Registration Authority compliance has been an ongoing concern for years. Unfortunately these concerns are only going to be further heightened with the likely addition of several hundred new gTLDs and the potential relaxation of vertical integration restrictions between registries and registrars.

There has been almost universal agreement within the Working Group about ICANN's compliance department receiving increased funding to do its job properly. Other proposals (including CAM) have provided for enhanced compliance fail safe measures by requiring integrated Registration Authorities to undergo a self financed audit to ensure compliance. However, the CAM proposal is unique in its proposal to expand use of the Post Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure (PDDRP) to empower third parties to use this administrative dispute procedure for vertical integration violations.

Historically ICANN has included a provision in all Registration Authority agreements specifically prohibiting any third party beneficiaries in connection with the agreements. The PDDRP, however, for the first recognizes that third parties have a right to bring an administrative challenge against a registry for a violation of the representations set forth in the application and or registry agreement. While the PDDRP is currently limited to only disputes involving violations of “community” applications it is proposed that the scope of PDDRP be expanded to handle violations of any vertical separation safeguards.

The focus of this concept is to empower third parties that may be negatively impacted by a Registration Authorities violation of vertical integration safeguards to proactively address such violations instead of relying upon ICANN's over worked compliance department or a third party audit.

Legal Framework: ICANN should rename/restructure the existing proposed Registry Agreement as currently found in the Draft Applicant Guidebook (DAG) into more modular agreement. The title of the document should also be renamed Registration Authority

Master Agreement (RAMA) to reflect the continued blurring between resellers, registrars, registry owners and registry service providers in the existing marketplace.²¹ The chapeau of this agreement would broadly define the relationship between the parties (ICANN and the Registration Authority) and would be modelled in large part after the current accountability framework that ccTLD administrators have entered into with ICANN. This base agreement would then be supplemented through a series of standard addendums/annexes that could reflect a number of business models, e.g. standard Registrar, standard Registry Operator; Sponsor; Registry Operator seeking to provide domain name registrations services to registrants; Intergovernmental and Public Sector Applicants; and restrictions imposed on Registration Authorities (Registries/Registrars) by national competition authorities. It is understood that this provision may need to be brought into consideration at a later time in order to not delay the introduction of new gTLDs.

Additional Policy Considerations: While the above referenced issues need to be satisfactorily resolved prior to the finalization of the Applicant Guidebook, there are a number of other additional policy considerations that need to be properly addressed if the full range of potential new gTLD business models is to have a chance of being successful. One issue that requires a broader discussion within the ICANN community is the fees that ICANN charges in connection with domain name registrations. As set forth in the GAC advice to the ICANN Board in its Brussels communiqué, “the new gTLD process should meet the global public interest consistent with the Affirmation of Commitments,” so that the “cost considerations” are “at a reasonable and proportionate level in order not to exclude developing country stakeholders.”²² Unfortunately, ICANN has yet to explain in any

²¹ The concept of a Master Agreement is commonly used in business to provide an overarching legal framework between the parties.

²² See GAC Brussels' Communiqué (23 June 2010) [insert HTML link]

documentation why they are increasing the ICANN registry fee costs by 500% over similar registry agreements recently executed.²³

ICANN's current funding model is largely based on a per transaction charge imposed on both gTLD registries and registrars. While this model mostly works in the current marketplace, this funding model does not scale regarding business models in which the registry may wish to give away domain names for free or in a vertically integrated single registrant/brand TLD. Therefore, there is a need for a forum in which ICANN reviews and perhaps revises its pricing models.²⁴

While intellectual property protection and access to accurate Whois information are two issues within the ICANN community that usually evoke strong responses from different stakeholders groups, some single registrant/brand/registrant verified TLDs may require a re-evaluation as to the appropriateness of these mechanisms or the manner in which they are utilized.

These additional policy considerations are not intended to interject new over-arching issues into the new gTLD process. However, they are intended to serve as clear reminder as to some of the issues that ICANN may not have fully accounted for in the unlimited and diverse business models that may be submitted through ICANN's new gTLD process.

²³ The current draft template registry agreement proposes a \$25,000 annual fee for up to 50,000 domain names registered within the TLD, this is a 500% increase over the \$5,000 fee incorporated into the .COOP and .AERO agreements that ICANN has recently executed.

²⁴ See <http://forum.icann.org/lists/op-budget-fy2011/msg00011.html>

IPC Proposal

The GNSO Council has formed a Working Group of interested Stakeholder Group / Constituency representatives and community participants, to collaborate broadly with knowledgeable individuals and organizations, in order to consider recommendations on Vertical Integration (VI).

Part of the working group's effort will be to incorporate ideas and suggestions gathered from Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies through this Stakeholder Group / Constituency Statement. Inserting your Stakeholder Group / Constituency's response in this form will make it much easier for the Working Group to summarize the responses. This information is helpful to the community in understanding the points of view of various stakeholders. However, you should feel free to add any information you deem important to inform the working group's deliberations, even if this does not fit into any of the questions listed below.

Process

- Please identify the members of your constituency who participated in developing the perspective(s) set forth below.
- *The description of the category of new gTLDs for which an exception should be recognized with regard to vertical integration (or alternatively, with respect to registrar non-discrimination requirements) was originally proposed by J. Scott Evans, refined during an extensive online discussion on the mailing list of all IPC members, and summarized in an earlier draft of this document for review by all IPC members, and finalized for approval by the IPC Officers. Other elements of responses to this template were drafted by Steve Metalitz and circulated for comment on the full IPC list on May 2,*

2010. Those contributing to the discussion at some phase of this process included: Paul McGrady, Fred Felman, Fabricio Vayra, Ellen Shankman, Adam Scoville, Hector Manoff, Claudio Digangi, David-Irving Tayer, Martin Schwimmer, Nick Wood, David Taylor, Marc Trachtenberg, Kristina Rosette and others.

- Please describe the process by which your constituency arrived at the perspective(s) set forth below.
- *See preceding question.*

Questions

Please provide your stakeholder group / constituency's input on the following charter objectives:

Objective 1: To make policy recommendations that provide clear direction to ICANN staff and new gTLD applicants on whether, and if so under what conditions, contracts for new gTLD registries can permit vertical integration or otherwise deviate from current forms of registry-registrar separation, and equivalent access and non-discriminatory access.

IPC generally supports the strict separation approach approved by the ICANN Board on March 12. However, appropriate exceptions to this approach should be recognized. In particular, IPC believes that a new gTLD registry meeting one or more of the following models should (a) be allowed to control an ICANN-accredited registrar solely for the purpose of sponsoring registrations in that gTLD; (b) not be required to use an ICANN-accredited registrar for registration of second-level domain names within the gTLD; or (c) be permitted to enter into exclusive arrangements with one or a limited number of ICANN-accredited registrars for the purpose of sponsoring registrations in that gTLD,.

These models pertain only to branded gTLDs. Though there may be other exceptions to VI/CO rules, the IPC comments are limited to those gTLDs where the string is an identical match to the registry's trademark/service mark, which we will heretofore refer to as ".brands." We are of the view that it is preferable to have a specific .brand category, clearly

defined, than seek to have brand owners try to seek to dress their application as a Community application for instance.

Models and Discussion:

1. Branded Single Registrant, Single User - .brand where the brand holder is the Registered Name Holder and user of all second-level domain names in the TLD)

This case is clear and simple. The trademark owner/holder owns and operates the registry either directly or indirectly, is the Registered Name Holder for all second-level names in the TLD, and is the user of all second-level names in the TLD. No second-level names are registered or delegated to any third party with the exception of wholly owned subsidiaries and otherwise affiliated companies. An example of this sort of VI/CO regulatory exception would be a direct-to-consumer retailer – “Buy Stuff”, which would be the registry, sole Registered Name Holder, and sole user of second level domain names, e.g. <locations.buystuff> <clothes.buystuff> or <housewares.buystuff>.

1. Branded Single Registrant, Multiple Related Users - .brand where the trademark owner is the Registered Name Holder of all second-level domains but licenses those second-level domains to third parties that have a relationship with the brand owner (e.g., customers, suppliers, authorized dealers, etc.) whereby the registration agreement is part and parcel of and ancillary to a primary agreement for goods or services.

This model permits trademark owners to engage more fully and embrace in new gTLD innovation by bundling non-registry related services with domains. Such a model could be popular with ISPs, technology, and media companies.

2. Branded Trademark Licensed Multiple Registrant Multiple Users - .brand where the trademark owner and its trademark licensees are the Registered Name Holders and

users of all second- level domains in the TLD. An example of this sort of exception would be trademark owners that operate a franchise system (<.fastburger>), distributors, real estate agents, and cooperative members (e.g. <.truevalue>). Using the Fast Burger example: Fast Burger would be the registry and a Registered Name Holder (e.g. <headquarters.fastburger> or <humanresources.fastburger>), and would allow third parties operating under a trademark license to be Registered Name Holders (e.g. <Chicago.fastburger> or <BobSmith.fastburger>).

This model is important for trademark owners that wish to maintain strict control over registration of second-level domain names, but need some flexibility related to ownership and local control.

Further Conditions for Exceptions:

.Brand gTLDs must adhere to the following conditions in order to be exempt from VI/CO restrictions (The IPC recognizes that any threshold naturally creates a problem for those who may not meet it and some IPC members have expressed concern at where the threshold is set. It is always a balance of fairness and seeking to ensure that there is no gaming. The level suggested is thus one which is hopefully sufficiently low to allow many brand owners who wish to participate to be able to, yet dissuade third parties who may seek to game or abuse the exception by registering a trade mark solely to be able to apply for a .brand to be rightly excluded. To nevertheless ensure a safeguard to this we suggest that applicants who do not meet the criteria can make their case to ICANN as to why they should be considered and ICANN has the discretion (or can delegate the discretion) to allow in certain cases):

(a) The trademark to which the .brand is an identical match must be the subject of trademark registrations of national effect in at least three countries in each of at least three of the five ICANN regions.

(b) For first-round applicants, the registrations of national effect referenced in (a) above must have issued on before June 27, 2008.

(c) The .brand exemption is inapplicable to trademark owners whose principal business is the operation of a domain name registry, domain name registrar, or domain name reseller.

(d) The relationship between the .brand TLD and its customer/Registered Name Holder is defined by terms of service that encompasses a registration agreement and governs content, the bundling of services or the purchase of a product; membership in an organization or cooperative; maintenance of the terms of a contract, trademark license; or an appropriate combination of these factors.

(e) Second-level .brand domain name registrations in models 2 and 3 are held in trust by the TLD operator and are not delegated to a third-party user

(f) Second-level .brand domain name registrations in model 3 are delegated to the user, but under the quality control provisions of a trademark license agreement that allows the registry to terminate the registration at will

(g) Mixed-use gTLDs, where some names are held by the registry and other names registered to external parties are not exempt from CO/VI regulations.

IPC Objectives for suggestions:

These objectives have been included to facilitate discussion of possible solutions that may be different from what is prescribed above. These objectives have been included so the community may understand the “spirit” of what is being proposed and understand what many brand owners have identified as helpful in the new gTLD process.. This proposal prescribes a delegation and distribution model for .brand gTLDs that:

- global trade and trust by adapting to various business models of trademark holders*
- guards consumers from potential harm through the reduction of phishing and fraud*
- protects and honors intellectual property that conforms to international standards while not expanding any intellectual property right beyond that granted by the national governments issuing such rights*

- *encourages innovation within the new gTLD namespace*
- *allows rights holders (for profit and non-profit) to provide maximum value and choice to their customers and constituencies while maintaining strict quality control standards applicable to maintaining trademarks*
- *facilitates a cost effective and low-priced domain name alternative*
- *eliminates gaming through geographic and time restrictions on qualifying trademarks*
- *permits trademark owners to reap the benefits of .brand TLDs*

The IPC is proposing very narrow use cases that should have no, or very limited, impact on existing contracted parties. These cases only describe branded single registrant gTLDs and are limited to this context.

IPC looks forward to discussion of other clearly defined situations in which relaxation of strict separation (or non-discrimination) requirements may be appropriate and welcomes discussion and feedback on the above.

Objective 2: To review current and previous ICANN gTLD registry contracts and policies to identify the current and previous restrictions and practices concerning registry-registrar separation, and equivalent access and non-discriminatory access in place.

Objectives 2-4 describe work to be undertaken by the WG. IPC looks forward to commenting on this work once it is completed.

Objective 3: To identify and clearly articulate the changes to current cross-ownership arrangements contemplated by the options described in the most recent version of the DAG and supporting documents and considered by ICANN staff in connection with the planned introduction of new gTLDs.

Objective 4: To identify and clearly articulate the differences between the current

restrictions and practices concerning registry-registrar separation and equal equivalent access, on the one hand, and the options described in the most recent version of the DAG and supporting documents¹ and changes considered by staff, on the other hand.

In addition, comments on any aspect related to the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars that you think should be taken into account by the Working Group as part of its deliberations are welcome. For example, comments may be submitted on: (i) recommended models for the New gTLD Program, (ii) the economic analysis conducted by economists retained by ICANN, including the CRA Report < <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/crai-report-24oct08-en.pdf> > as well as the one recently submitted by Salop and Wright < <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/registry-registrar-separation-vertical-integration-options-salop-wright-28jan10-en.pdf> >, (iii) the Board approved model < <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5> > proposed by the Board at the ICANN Meeting in Nairobi on 12 March 2010, or (iv) whether the restrictions currently applicable to existing gTLD registries should be changed, or (v) additional work that should be performed by the Working Group to recommend models for the New gTLD Program.

Background Information

- Review the Issues Report on Vertical Integration Between Registries and Registrars, please refer to <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/report-04dec09-en.pdf> [PDF, 254 KB].
- The ICANN Board resolution on Vertical Integration is posted at <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5>.
- To review the charter describing the policy work to be undertaken by the Vertical Integration Working Group, please refer to: <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/vi-chartered-objectives-10mar10-en.pdf> [PDF, 41 KB].

- For information on the details of the implementation planning activities for new gTLDs, please refer to the documents posted at <http://icann.org/en/topics/new-gtld-program.htm>.
- For additional resources on the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars, please refer to the documents posted at: https://st.icann.org/vert-integration-pdp/index.cgi?https_st_icann_org_vert_integration_pdp_index.cgi_vi_resources.

ANNEX C - GNSO Council Resolutions on Vertical Integration

- **20100128-1**
- Motion to commence a Policy Development Process on Vertical Integration between registries and registrars.
- Whereas, on 24 September 2009, the GNSO Council requested ICANN Staff to prepare an Issues Report on the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars;
- Whereas, on 11 December 2009, the Issues Report on vertical integration between registries and registrars < <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/report-04dec09-en.pdf> > was delivered to the GNSO Council;
- Whereas, the Issues Report includes recommendations that the GNSO Council delay the initiation of a Policy Development Process (PDP) on the issue for a period of 1-2 years;
- Whereas, notwithstanding the recommendations in the Issues Report, the GNSO Council has decided to initiate a PDP on vertical integration between registries and registrars; and
- Whereas, the GNSO Council has decided against initiating a Task Force as defined in the ICANN Bylaws < <http://www.icann.org/en/general/bylaws.htm> >;
- Now therefore, be it:
- RESOLVED, that the GNSO Council has reviewed the recommendations contained in the Issues Report, and nonetheless approves the initiation of a PDP on the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars;
- FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PDP shall evaluate which policy recommendations, if any, should be developed on the topic of vertical integration between registrars and registries affecting both new gTLDs and existing gTLDs, as may be possible under existing contracts and as allowed under the ICANN Bylaws;

- FURTHER RESOLVED, that the GNSO Council shall convene a Working Group to fulfil the requirements of the PDP, including a review of ICANN Staff's prior work with respect to vertical integration, and develop recommendations accordingly; and
- FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Working Group shall deliver its Final Report to the GNSO Council no later than sixteen weeks from the date of this resolution.

The motion carried by a roll call vote.

Contracted Party House - Seven Votes against.

6 votes against + one Absentee ballot - Adrian Kinderis against.

Non Contracted Party House - Eleven (11) Votes in favour - two (2) votes against

11 Votes in favour:

Zahid Jamil, Mike Rodenbaugh (CBUC); Kristina Rosette, David Taylor (IPC); Rafik Dammak, William Drake, Mary Wong, Rosemary Sinclair, Debra Hughes, Wendy Seltzer (NCSG) + one absentee ballot - Olga Cavalli in favour.

2 Votes against: Jaime Wagner, Wolf-Ulrich Knoblen (ISPCP)

10 March 2010 GNSO Council Resolution

20100310-1

Motion to Approve Vertical Integration (VI) Charter:

Whereas, on 28 January 2010, the GNSO Council approved a policy development process (PDP) on the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars;

Whereas, the GNSO Council created a drafting team for the purposes of drafting a charter to fulfil the requirements of the PDP; and,

Whereas the drafting team completed its work and presented its charter proposal to the GNSO Council on Friday Feb 26, 2010.

Whereas, the GNSO Council has reviewed the proposed charter to guide the working group in its PDP activities;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT:

Resolved, that the GNSO Council approves the following charter:

<http://gns0.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/vi-chartered-objectives-10mar10-en.pdf>

Resolved further, that the GNSO Council appoints Stephane van Gelder to be the GNSO Council Liaison to the Vertical Integration Working group (VI WG).

Resolved further, that the GNSO Council directs that a working group be formed to perform the work of the VI WG, and that the VI WG shall initiate its activities within 14 days after the approval of this motion. Until such time as the WG can select a chair and that chair can be confirmed by the GNSO Council, the GNSO Council Liaison shall act as interim chair.

Resolved further, that the WG is directed to develop a version of objective 5 and to recommend it to the Council within three weeks for either (a) Council approval of the WG-recommended Objective 5 or (b) Council vote on which version of Objective 5 (as reflected in the draft Charter of March 10, 2010) should apply.

ANNEX D - MEMBERS OF THE VI WORKING GROUP

Contracted Parties House

Registrars Stakeholder Group
Stephane van Gelder (GNSO Council Vice Chair)
Ashe-lee Jegathesan
Statton Hammock
Michele Neylon
Frederick Felman
Jothan Frakes
Ruslan Sattarov
Jeff Eckhaus
Jean Christophe Vignes
Ben Anderson
Krista Papac
Tim Ruiz
Thomas Barrett
Graham Chynoweth
Faisal Shah
Jacob Williams
Paul Diaz
Eric Brunner Williams
Amadeu Abril I Abril

gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group
Chuck Gomes (GNSO Chair)
Nacho Amadoz
Ken Stubbs
Brian Cute
Ching Chiao
Vladimir Shadrinov
Jeff Neuman
Keith Drazek
Kathy Kleiman
David Maher

Non Contracted Parties House

Commercial and Business Constituency
Berry Cobb
Mike Rodenbaugh
Jon Nevett
Jarkko Ruuska
Mikey O'Connor
Michael Palage
Ron Andruff

Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers Constituency
Tony Harris
Olivier Murrion

Intellectual Property Interests
Constituency
Victoria Carrington
Kristina Rosette
J. Scott Evans
Scott Austin

Non Commercial Stakeholder Group
Avri Doria
Milton Mueller
Mark Bannon

NomCom Appointee
Olga Cavalli (GNSO Council Vice Chair)

At Large
Alan Greenberg (ALAC Vice-Chair)
Sivasubramanian M
Baudouin Schombé
Cheryl Langdon-Orr (ALAC Chair)
Sebastien Bachollet (ALAC Vice-Chair)

Individuals
Phil Buckingham
Roberto Gaetano
Jahangir Hossain
Modi Konark
Vika Mpisane
Tero Mustala
George Sadowsky
Jannik Skou / Alternate Dan Trampedach
Kristian Ormen
Steve Pinkos
Mike Silber
Richard Tindal
Liam Drew
Rahman Khan
Anthony van Couvering
Katrin Ohlmer
Liz Williams

The statements of interest of the Drafting Team members can be found at: <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/soi-vi-pdp-wg-01apr10-en>.

The email archives can be found at <http://forum.icann.org/lists/gns0-vi-feb10/>

ANNEX E - Summary of Public Comment Period

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT ON INITIATION OF THE GNSO POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS ON VERTICAL INTEGRATION BETWEEN REGISTRARS AND REGISTRIES

The GNSO Council opened a public comment forum on the commencement of a policy development process on the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars. A summary of the comments submitted during the public comment forum from the period 29 March 2010 – 18 April 2010 is provided below.

Background

The GNSO Council commenced a policy development process (PDP) on the topic of vertical integration between registrars and registries. The GNSO Council has formed a working group to evaluate whether policy recommendations, if any, should be developed on the topic of vertical integration between registrars and registries affecting both new gTLDs and existing gTLDs.

The public comment forum sought comment on any aspect related to the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars that should be taken into account by the Working Group as part of its deliberations. Comments were suggested on the following topics: (i) the recommended models for the New gTLD Program, (ii) the economic analysis conducted by economists retained by ICANN, including the CRA Report < <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/crai-report-24oct08-en.pdf> > as well as the one recently submitted by Salop and Wright < <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/registry-registrar-separation-vertical-integration-options-salop-wright-28jan10-en.pdf> >, (iii) the Board approved model < <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5> > proposed by the Board at the ICANN Meeting in Nairobi on 12 March 2010, or (iv) whether the restrictions currently applicable to existing gTLD registries should be changed, or (v) additional work that should be performed by the Working Group to recommend models for the New gTLD Program.

Summary

Six comments were received from five commentators during the public comment period. Two comments were erroneously submitted for a separate public comment period (on the options for the ICM application for .xxx) and are not summarized below.

Stakeholder Group /Constituency Statements.

As part of the GNSO Council's policy development process, the working group has requested constituency and stakeholder group statements on the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars. These statements are due on 6 May 2010.

The Registrar Stakeholder Group (RGG) reaffirmed the prior Registry Constituency position on Registry-Registrar separation. That position is described in its entirety in **Annex A**.

Need for Definitions of Industry Roles.

Melbourne IT noted the need to clearly identify three industry roles: gTLD manager, gTLD registry operator, and gTLD registrar. The following definitions were recommended:

gTLD Manager- contracts with ICANN to manage a gTLD. The gTLD manager does not own the TLD, but is licensed to use the TLD for a fixed period of time. The licence can be renewed for further terms provided the conditions of the contract with ICANN continue to be met.

gTLD Registry Operator operates three key components of the gTLD infrastructure: shared registration system (SRS), gTLD DNS nameservers, gTLD WHOIS servers. The core role is that of an infrastructure manager.

gTLD Registrar is responsible for creating, changing and cancelling records in the gTLD registry. The core role is that of a records manager. A gTLD registrar has a contract with the registrants of domain names within a gTLD to perform registrar services. The gTLD registrar has a contract with the gTLD registry operator that governs their roles and responsibilities.

Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT

Mandatory Use of ICANN Accredited Registrars.

Two commentators recommended that ICANN maintain its policy recommendation that a gTLD must use ICANN accredited registrars. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan; Melbourne IT, Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

Equivalent Access Requirements.

ICANN should maintain the current requirement that registry operators not discriminate amongst registrars. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

Melbourne IT recommends that an ICANN accredited registrar that meets the policy requirements of a gTLD, must be able to operate within that gTLD under the same contractual conditions as other gTLD registrars. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

ICANN's decision to expand the Internet will increase competition and provide consumers with more options. Brand TLDs and community-based TLDs must be vertically-integrated. Why would these types of TLDs be forced to use a registrar? *Constantine Roussos, music.us*

Structural Separation Requirements.

Melbourne IT and the Registrar Stakeholder Group recommend that ICANN continue to maintain structural separation between the role of gTLD registry operator and gTLD registrar. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT; Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

Cross Ownership Among Industry Players should be permitted.

ICANN should not prohibit affiliates of ICANN-accredited registrars to apply to be a New TLD registry operator. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

ICANN should not prohibit affiliates of ICANN-accredited registrars to provide any types of services to registry operators. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

ICANN should not strictly prohibit registrars from selling registrations for TLDs of an affiliated registry operator. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

Keeping the registry-registrar separation makes sense for dominant extensions such as the .com, .net and .org but it makes no sense for upcoming new gTLDs, who will be attempting to set themselves apart from the Big gTLD 3 (.com, net, .org) and provide better services to benefit consumers. This holds especially true for the cases of brand owners with trademarks and community applicants. Why would these types of applicants engage in lobbying activities to get shelf space on registrars such as Godaddy? In the end what ICANN is assuring is the dominance of the other Big Registry 3. How does ICANN expect to have any competition in the registry industry if it adopts anti-competitive and anti-innovative measures such as registry-registrar separation, when the reality of the matter is that new TLDs are not expected to become as large as .com but are expected to differentiate themselves from the old regime and market leaders. *Constantine Roussos, music.us*

Melbourne IT asserts that a gTLD manager should be able to own and perform the function of gTLD registry operator for the gTLD being managed. Examples (VeriSign for com/net, Afiliias for .info, and Neustar for .biz). *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

Melbourne IT asserts that a gTLD manager or gTLD registry operator (or their parent company), may own up to 15% of an ICANN accredited gTLD registrar. If a gTLD manager or gTLD registry operator wished to own more than 15% of an ICANN accredited gTLD registrar, separate ICANN Board approval would be required, and additional contractual provisions to avoid anti-competitive behavior. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

Melbourne IT also asserts that gTLD accredited registrar (or their parent company), should be able to own up to 15% of a gTLD manager or gTLD registry operator. If a gTLD accredited registrar wished to own more than 15% of a gTLD manager or gTLD registry, this would require separate ICANN Board approval, and additional contractual provisions to avoid anti-competitive behavior. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

Melbourne IT states that a gTLD manager should be permitted to own and perform the function of gTLD registrar for a small gTLD that has less than 100,000 total registrations. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

The GNSO should do the right thing: introduce vertical integration. Ask consumers what they want. Pessimism and protecting the status quo or do they want the possibility of better services and innovation in the domain space. This is a no brainer for brand gTLDs and community gTLDs. *Constantine Roussos, music.us*

Vertical Integration restrictions must be removed because it is problematic for the upcoming gTLD open application process.

Case 1

For example, if someone with a long-standing trademark wants to create a new top level domain for their trademark, and wants to allow certain, approved entities to purchase domains with the trademarked extension, how will this be done without the Registry in effect acting as a Registrar.

Case 2

My second example involves someone who is approved to run a new top level domain Registry, but is not able to get any Registrar to list their domain.

While you may keep the restriction in place for .com, given their dominance, the Registry/Registrar ownership restriction should be completely eliminated for all other top level domains. *Mary Iqbal*

Use of Registration Data where there is cross ownership.

Any requirements intended to protect registrants from malicious or abusive conduct, including data issues, should go to the conduct at issue and not serve as an excuse to exclude an entire potential class of competitors along with the attendant public benefits of such competition. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

Melbourne IT notes that neither a gTLD manager nor gTLD registry operator, should use any of the registration data collected as part of managing/operating the gTLD, for the purposes of marketing registrar services for any other gTLD. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

Certain Cross Ownership Among Industry Players should not be permitted.

Melbourne IT notes that where a gTLD manager owns a gTLD registrar, that registrar should not perform the role of ICANN accredited registrar for any other gTLD. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

Observations on Current Market Conditions.

There is a rich history of registrars selling TLDs of affiliated registry operators in the gTLD and ccTLD spaces without any allegations of wrongdoing. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

Afilias has indicated in their post on CircleId on April 8th, 2010 that in 2010 the domain industry has grown to over 190 million domain names. The .com, .net and .org grew to over 80 million names and ccTLDs like .de (Germany) and .cn (China) have grown to about 45 million names. However, new gTLDs total less than 15 million names or only 7% of domain market share. New gTLDs are under-represented and competition generated from the existing new gTLDs (any gTLD other than .com, .net and org) is minor, as highlighted by the existing 7% market share. *Constantine Roussos, music.us*

How does ICANN believe that the oligopoly market power of the Big 3 registries can be addressed to increase competition in the registry industry and lower prices. How is preventing competition in this space good for the Internet? This is the year 2010 and the very concept of not allowing vertical integration based on historic reasons and the lobbying power of current registries certainly defies the purpose of leveling the playing field in the domain marketplace. *Constantine Roussos, music.us*

Melbourne IT made the following observations regarding current competition between gTLD managers:

- There is some level of competition between gTLDs at the time a registrant makes a decision to register a domain name.
- Once a registrant chooses a particular gTLD for a registration and begins to actively use the domain name, the switching costs are very high to move to another gTLD.
- Over time, most registrations within a particular gTLD will be from existing registrants, and only a small percentage of new registrants will be added every year. Thus a gTLD manager will have market power with respect to most of their registrations in the longer term.

Melbourne IT made the following observations regarding competition amongst registry operators:

- There is active competition amongst registry operators.
- A gTLD manager can contract with a particular registry operator, but can also change registry operators or even bring the services back in-house.
- Several registry operators today provide services across multiple TLDs.
- In the new gTLD environment additional companies will enter the market as registry operators, and gTLD managers will gain the benefits from a wide range of choices.

Melbourne IT made the following observations regarding competition amongst registrars:

- There is very active competition amongst registrars for the major gTLDs such as com/net/org/biz/info.

- Registrants can choose from a range of business models, and registrars often bundle services such as email and hosting with domain name registration.
- The registry/registrar separation model is now the dominant model used across both gTLDs and major ccTLDs.
- Many ICANN accredited gTLD registrars, are also registrars across many ccTLDs, with some being significant ccTLD registrars as well as gTLD registrars.

Melbourne IT believes that the market power that a gTLD manager can exert through their operation of a major gTLD (with more than 100,000 registrations), would allow them to have an unfair advantage as a gTLD registrar in other gTLDs. The gTLD manager could cross-subsidize the operations of a gTLD registrar to gain customers in other gTLD spaces, and attempt to up sell their own gTLD to those customers (which in turn would give them an unfair advantage over other gTLD managers). Thus Melbourne IT supports the separation of gTLD managers and registry operators from registrars, and also notes that a small gTLD Manager that owns a registrar for its gTLD should not provide registrar services for other gTLDs.

Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT

The ICANN Board should consider the enormous difference between the trajectory of the successful .cat registry, profitable in its second month of operation, and the range of exception from Recommendation 19 sought by the Vertical Integration working group “on behalf of linguistic and cultural or from developing country”, 25% to 125% larger than .cat’s registration base after four years of successful, profitable operation. *Eric Brunner-Williams*

Regarding the CRA International Report.

Melbourne IT notes that the CRA International report supported a relaxation of the vertical

separation requirements where the competitive concerns are not strong. Melbourne IT agrees that supporting some level of integration for small TLDs allows innovation in the creation of new gTLDs, and allows a gTLD manager to have some control over the whole process of launching and marketing a new gTLD to new registrants. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

Comments on the Board Resolution.

If the available choices are limited strictly to the Board's Resolution #5 at the Nairobi meeting, and imprudent exploits which put at risk consensus among stake holders, retention of the Board's Resolution #5 is probably the better of those two choices. *Eric Brunner-Williams*

Single Registrant TLDs.

Melbourne IT expects that single registrant TLDs will emerge in the gTLD round. The registration policy for such as TLD could be that all registrations in the gTLD must be licensed to the gTLD manager. For a small such TLD it would make sense that the gTLD manager could also own and operate a registrar function. However it would be necessary to ensure that a single-registrant TLD is not circumvented by ensuring all the registrations are in the name of the gTLD manager, but that the gTLD manager then rents out websites etc associated with those domain names – which in effect could be third party registrations. *Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT*

One participant expressed concern that should the GNSO makes a recommendation for some "single registrant" type of application, the Board should consider whether capture has taken place by parties previously not participatory in the new gTLD process development. *Eric Brunner-Williams*

Comments on the Salop and Wright Paper.

Melbourne IT points out that Salop and Wright notes that while vertical integration can facilitate innovation, in some circumstances vertical integration can harm competition through higher prices, lower quality levels, too little product variety, or less innovation.

Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT

Perceived Benefits of Vertical Integration.

The Registrar Stakeholder Group agrees with ICANN's expert economists that vertical integration of registries and registrars will enhance consumer benefits and provide consumers with lower prices, better service, and new innovation. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

The risks of malicious and abusive conduct that certain parties have raised as a concern would not be prevented by restricting the ability of a registrar to sell names of an affiliated registry operator. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Statement*

Vertical Integration, especially for closed community gTLDs, will benefit consumers by allowing the creation of service/product bundling as well as offering consumers differentiated pricing options given an increased product variety. Vertical integration will allow new gTLDs to be innovative by introducing new distribution and marketing channels in regards to product

placement. *Constantine Roussos, music.us*

Vertical integration will allow new gTLDs to differentiate themselves from competitors such as .com. It will allow them to offer a higher quality product with a competitive advantage

that is attached to the opportunity to incorporate new, innovative services that extend beyond mere domain name registrations. Vertical integration will help increase consumer willingness to pay given the value creation opportunity that it brings. These are some benefits:

- Economies of scale
- Economies of scope and strategic similarity between vertically-related activities
- Cost reduction
- Competitiveness
- Reduce threat from powerful suppliers and/or customers
- Higher degree of control over the entire value chain
- Leads to expansion to core competencies

Constantine Roussos, music.us

General Observations on the Proposals Discussed in the Working Group

A participant in the GNSO Working Group summarized the two broad areas of policy choices advocated in the Working Group as follows:

One set of proposals restores caps on registry ownership (or control) of registrars. Some treat the question of registrar ownership of registries, uncapped prior to Nairobi. In general, these proposals find minority ownership (or control) at the current level without harm, and more beneficial than no mechanism for registries to ensure competent access to registrants.

The other set of proposals generally propose to substantially increase, or remove, the cap on registry ownership (or control) of registrars. In general, these proposals find near-majority, even total ownership (or control) without harm, and more beneficial than the lower limits in the other set of proposals, and also more

beneficial than no mechanism for registries to ensure competent access to registrants.

Eric Brunner-Williams

The Board should consider whether the GNSO's working group is addressing the issue of vertical integration at all, or the allocation of profits for applications of a type anticipated by a significant plurality of those who engage in advocacy. *Eric Brunner-Williams*

Recommended Models for Vertical Integration:

Model Submitted by Melbourne IT:

Melbourne IT recommends that an allowance of 15% be made for a gTLD manager or gTLD registry operator to own a proportion of a gTLD registrar, or vice-versa. This means that ICANN would not be burdened with having to approve minor changes in ownership.

Melbourne IT also supports vertical integration for small gTLDs with less than 100,000 registrations, provided that the gTLD registrar owned by the gTLD manager is not able to offer registrar services for other gTLDs.

Where a gTLD manager, gTLD registry operator, or registrar seeks a greater than 15% ownership structure, Melbourne IT believes that the parties would need to show:

- the benefits to registrants of the new ownership structure, and show that these benefits would not be available through the current competitive registrar model
- that the gTLD manager does not have more than 100,000 registrations
- that the gTLD registrar does not have more than 40% of the total registrations in any gTLD with more than 100,000 names

Ashe-lee Jegathesan, Melbourne IT

ANNEX F - STAKEHOLDER GROUP/CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

REGISTRAR STAKEHOLDER GROUP (RSG) POSITION STATEMENT

After consideration of the public interest benefits, the RSG supports the following principles regarding Registry-Registrar separation for New TLDs:

1. The RSG continues to support the GNSO recommendation that domain names be registered only through ICANN accredited registrars. This ensures that the public interest is protected by having all registrations governed by the rights and responsibilities found in the Registrar Accreditation Agreement;
2. ICANN should maintain the current structural separation requirements between the registry and registrar functions (i.e. the functions are handled separately);
3. ICANN should maintain the current requirement that registry operators not discriminate amongst registrars;
4. We agree with ICANN's expert economists that vertical integration of registries and registrars will enhance consumer benefits and provide consumers with lower prices, better service, and new innovation;
5. The risks of malicious and abusive conduct that certain parties have raised as a concern would not be prevented by restricting the ability of a registrar to sell names of an affiliated registry operator;
6. There is a rich history of registrars selling TLDs of affiliated registry operators in the gTLD and ccTLD spaces without any allegations of wrongdoing;

7. Any requirements intended to protect registrants from malicious or abusive conduct , including data issues, should go to the conduct at issue and not serve as an excuse to exclude an entire potential class of competitors along with the attendant public benefits of such competition;

8. ICANN should not prohibit affiliates of ICANN-accredited registrars to apply to be a New TLD registry operator;

9. ICANN should not prohibit affiliates of ICANN-accredited registrars to provide any types of services to registry operators; and

10. ICANN should not strictly prohibit registrars from selling registrations for TLDs of an affiliated registry operator.

CONCLUSION

ICANN should move forward positively and firmly to permit the integration of registry operators and registrars for New TLDs without sales restrictions, as such would inure to the benefit of consumers and the public interest.

The opinions expressed by the RSG in this Position Paper should not be interpreted to reflect the individual opinion of any particular RSG Member.

ISPCP COMMENTS ON VERTICAL INTEGRATION

The ISPCP Constituency has been following the discussions concerning Vertical Integration with keen interest, and would like to submit the following comments.

Whereas the ISPCP is supportive of initiatives that will help foster the growth and development of the Internet and its resources, we are somewhat concerned that the prospect of modifying the existing Registry/Registrar structural separation, will not benefit the public interest, or assist in preserving the security and stability of the Internet. The introduction of competition into the Registrar level of the domain namespace, has produced a proven environment that serves registrants all over the world, and indeed resulted in significant cost reductions for these millions of domain name buyers.

It is true that the projected introduction of numerous new gTLDs, presents some new issues that need to be considered:

- Single-registrant TLDs, such as corporations who apply for a new gTLD with intent to limit use of the domain, for their own internal corporate use, may not warrant the support of all ICANN accredited registrars.
- Community TLDs, which are applied for in order to serve small and narrowly defined populations, might not be of interest to the top tiered Registrars, due to the reduced potential number of registrants involved.
- New GTLD registries that have limited market appeal, and are not corporate brand TLDs (single-registrant) which are restricted for internal registration, nor Community TLDs which have a defined target population however large or small, may find that

none of the principal Registrars (those with significant market share), are interested in distributing their TLD to the public.

The above are examples where further consideration could be warranted on the question of exceptions, but the mainstream open TLDs including those currently in operation, particularly those with significant market dominance such as '.com', should continue to be subject to the existing separation arrangements.

Rather than make specific recommendations herein, on the possible ways to go about exceptions, we prefer at this time to await the outcome of the deliberations currently being held in the context of the Vertical Integration Working Group, which we are part of.

As undoubtedly ICANN is aware, numerous ISPs and Connectivity Providers worldwide are routinely involved in the domain name registration market, in many cases acting as resellers to the ICANN accredited Registrars. Thus it is essential that the stability and transparency of this market place, continue to be guaranteed in order to avoid any unnecessary turmoil.

In closing, the ISPCP Constituency is in favour of Full Structural Separation of Registries and Registrars as an overall policy, with the premise that further discussion over the possibility of some exceptions may be undertaken. However prior to accepting the need for any exceptions, the emphasis must remain on the need to define strong safeguards that will guarantee a competitive, secure and stable internet.

BC Position on Registry-Registrar vertical separation September 2009

Background

The principle of the vertical separation of Registry and Registrar was established 11 years ago as a pro-competitive action at the time of the monopoly of one entity (Network Solutions now VeriSign) owning the registry and acting as registrar for .com .org and .net. ICANN created the system we have today, where registrants place orders with ICANN-accredited registrars, who in turn place the orders with ICANN-contracted TLD registries.

In essence there were three pro-competitive benefits:

- a) the splitting of a dominant market player thus avoiding the potential for the exercise of dominance;
- b) the subsequent development of a competitive market with multiple registrars offering consumers a variety of services connected with the purchase of domain names;
- c) the subsequent development of competition at the registry level as ICANN moved to open up the registry market.

The BC supported this principle.

To ensure this structure held, ICANN restricted registries from acquiring a substantial percentage of any registrar, so VeriSign (the .com and .net registry) cannot buy a controlling interest in registrar GoDaddy, for example.

Judged by price alone (as an indicator of a competitive market) the pro-competitive benefits have proved to be real. Today the price of a .com domain name has dropped and there are multiple registrars competing for business with varied offerings.

Developments

In the subsequent 11 years, the BC has continued to support a cautious expansion of gTLD registries (in pursuit of the competitive benefits) and the continuation of Registry Registrar

separation. Some of the largest registrars have become registry operators which also register those TLD names to the public. For example GoDaddy provides the registry for country-code .me (so Montenegro makes the rules, not ICANN). Also certain registries have been affiliated with domain registration companies for some time e.g. HostWay and .PRO, Poptel and .COOP, CORE and .CAT, Verisign and DBMS, GoDaddy and .ME, Afilias and .INFO.

Some registrars, such as eNom, are pressing ICANN to eliminate the restrictions on Registry-Registrar cross-ownership, so that those registrars can compete as registry businesses, sell new gTLD domains directly to the public, and sell them to all other ICANN accredited registrars as well. Other registrars, such as Network Solutions, has called for a continuation of the structural separation requirements between registries and registrars, but some liberalization in the cross-ownership requirements.

ICANN has reacted positively to the proposals to change in a limited fashion by proposing a continuation of the principle of separation BUT with a waiver for the first 100,000 names (described as a *limited lifting* of the requirement):

"With a limited exception, a registrar should not sell domain services of an affiliated registry. This limit is set to a certain threshold, in this model, 100,000 domain names".

<http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/regy-regr-separation-18feb09-en.pdf>

The questions are thus:

- a) 11 years on, do the pro-competitive benefits outlined above continue to exist?
- b) Does the 100,000 waiver effectively remove the principle of separation in that it will apply to the most market-significant names?

The position of the existing market players

In favour of the status quo of continued separation

Certain existing registries, such as NeuStar (.biz) and Public Interest Registry (.org) are in support of any entity becoming a registry or registry operator, so long as that entity does not distribute domain names in the same TLD that they operate as a registry. They oppose the proposal to discontinue separation on the basis that registrars have a substantial head start in marketing domain names to the public.

In favour of change and the ending of separation

Certain existing large registrars argue that only entities with market power which can be exercised for anti-competitive purposes (such as Verisign with .com and .net), should be subject to cross-ownership restrictions. These registrars claim it is in consumers' interests to allow cross-ownership because it would enhance competition and allow for the passing on of operational efficiencies in the form of lower prices.

BC Position (general market)

Given the uncertainty of the merits of the arguments either way the BC believes that the burden of proof must lie with the proponents of change. Those who favour change must demonstrate:

- a) that the competitive benefits outlined above no longer apply and
- b) that there will be new competitive benefits and no significant adverse effects as a result of such change.

The decision is of course not in the hands of registrars or registries but in the hands of the ICANN Board. The question for the Board is simple: "Will removing the vertical separation safeguards either INCREASE or DECREASE the likelihood of the exercise of dominance within the domain name marketplace?"

Recommendation 1:

The BC believes that removing the existing vertical separation safeguards between registries and registrars may increase the likelihood of the exercise of dominance within the domain name marketplace.

The BC believes that the proponents of change have not satisfactorily demonstrated the likelihood of market place benefits to users.

The BC believes that the proposed 100,000 waiver is likely to effectively remove the principle of separation in that it will apply to the most market-significant names.

The BC thus opposes any change to the status quo for all TLDs intended for sale to third parties (i.e. those unconnected with the Registry).

BC position (closed markets)

It is possible that in the forthcoming expansion of domain names there will be proprietary domain names not for sale to the general public eg dot *brand*. In this unique case the BC would accept that it makes no sense for a company owning its own name or trademark in the form of a domain name to be obliged to go to a third party to register its own second-level domain names. Thus an opt-out for this special case of internal use seems appropriate.

Recommendation 2:

The BC believes that uniquely for domain names intended for internal use, the principle of registry-registrar vertical separation should be waived.

Stakeholder Group / Constituency Input Template

Vertical Integration Policy Development Process

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE AT THE LATEST BY 6-MAY, 2010 TO THE GNSO SECRETARIAT (gnso.secretariat@gnso.icann.org) which will forward your statement to the Vertical Integration Working Group.

The GNSO Council has formed a Working Group of interested Stakeholder Group / Constituency representatives and community participants, to collaborate broadly with knowledgeable individuals and organizations, in order to consider recommendations on Vertical Integration (VI).

Part of the working group's effort will be to incorporate ideas and suggestions gathered from Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies through this Stakeholder Group / Constituency Statement. Inserting your Stakeholder Group / Constituency's response in this form will make it much easier for the Working Group to summarize the responses. This information is helpful to the community in understanding the points of view of various stakeholders. However, you should feel free to add any information you deem important to inform the working group's deliberations, even if this does not fit into any of the questions listed below.

Process

- Please identify the members of your constituency who participated in developing the perspective(s) set forth below.
- *The description of the category of new gTLDs for which an exception should be recognized with regard to vertical integration (or alternatively, with respect to registrar non-discrimination requirements) was originally proposed by J. Scott Evans, refined during an extensive online discussion on the mailing list of all IPC members, and summarized in an earlier draft of this document for review by all IPC members, and finalized for approval by the IPC Officers. Other elements of responses to this template were drafted by Steve Metalitz and circulated for comment on the full IPC list on May 2, 2010. Those contributing to the discussion at some phase of this process included: Paul McGrady, Fred Felman, Fabricio Vayra, Ellen Shankman, Adam*

Scoville, Hector Manoff, Claudio Digangi, David-Irving Tayer, Martin Schwimmer, Nick Wood, David Taylor, Marc Trachtenberg, Kristina Rosette and others.

- Please describe the process by which your constituency arrived at the perspective(s) set forth below.
- *See preceding question.*

Questions

Please provide your stakeholder group / constituency's input on the following charter objectives:

Objective 1: To make policy recommendations that provide clear direction to ICANN staff and new gTLD applicants on whether, and if so under what conditions, contracts for new gTLD registries can permit vertical integration or otherwise deviate from current forms of registry-registrar separation, and equivalent access and non-discriminatory access.

IPC generally supports the strict separation approach approved by the ICANN Board on March 12. However, appropriate exceptions to this approach should be recognized. In particular, IPC believes that a new gTLD registry meeting one or more of the following models should (a) be allowed to control an ICANN-accredited registrar solely for the purpose of sponsoring registrations in that gTLD; (b) not be required to use an ICANN-accredited registrar for registration of second-level domain names within the gTLD; or (c) be permitted to enter into exclusive arrangements with one or a limited number of ICANN-accredited registrars for the purpose of sponsoring registrations in that gTLD.

These models pertain only to branded gTLDs. Though there may be other exceptions to VI/CO rules, the IPC comments are limited to those gTLDs where the string is an identical match to the registry's trademark/service mark, which we will heretofore refer to as ".brands." We are of the view that it is preferable to have a specific .brand category, clearly defined, than seek to have brand owners try to seek to dress their application as a Community application for instance.

Models and Discussion:

2. Branded Single Registrant, Single User - .brand where the brand holder is the Registered Name Holder and user of all second-level domain names in the TLD)

This case is clear and simple. The trademark owner/holder owns and operates the registry either directly or indirectly, is the Registered Name Holder for all second-level names in the TLD, and is the user of all second-level names in the TLD. No second-level names are registered or delegated to any third party with the exception of wholly owned subsidiaries and otherwise affiliated companies. An example of this sort of VI/CO regulatory exception would be a direct-to-consumer retailer – “Buy Stuff”, which would be the registry, sole Registered Name Holder, and sole user of second level domain names, e.g. <locations.buystuff> <clothes.buystuff> or <housewares.buystuff>.

3. Branded Single Registrant, Multiple Related Users - .brand where the trademark owner is the Registered Name Holder of all second-level domains but licenses those second-level domains to third parties that have a relationship with the brand owner (e.g., customers, suppliers, authorized dealers, etc.) whereby the registration agreement is part and parcel of and ancillary to a primary agreement for goods or services.

This model permits trademark owners to engage more fully and embrace in new gTLD innovation by bundling non-registry related services with domains. Such a model could be popular with ISPs, technology, and media companies.

4. Branded Trademark Licensed Multiple Registrant Multiple Users - .brand where the trademark owner and its trademark licensees are the Registered Name Holders and users of all second-level domains in the TLD. An example of this sort of exception would be trademark owners that operate a franchise system (<.fastburger>), distributors, real estate agents, and cooperative members (e.g. <.truevalue>). Using the Fast Burger example: Fast Burger would be the registry and a Registered Name Holder (e.g. <headquarters.fastburger> or <humanresources.fastburger>), and would allow third parties operating under a trademark license to be Registered Name Holders (e.g. <Chicago.fastburger> or <BobSmith.fastburger>).

This model is important for trademark owners that wish to maintain strict control over registration of second-level domain names, but need some flexibility related to ownership and local control.

Further Conditions for Exceptions:

.Brand gTLDs must adhere to the following conditions in order to be exempt from VI/CO restrictions (The IPC recognizes that any threshold naturally creates a problem for those who may not meet it

and some IPC members have expressed concern at where the threshold is set. It is always a balance of fairness and seeking to ensure that there is no gaming. The level suggested is thus one which is hopefully sufficiently low to allow many brand owners who wish to participate to be able to, yet dissuade third parties who may seek to game or abuse the exception by registering a trade mark solely to be able to apply for a .brand to be rightly excluded. To nevertheless ensure a safeguard to this we suggest that applicants who do not meet the criteria can make their case to ICANN as to why they should be considered and ICANN has the discretion (or can delegate the discretion) to allow in certain cases):

(a) The trademark to which the .brand is an identical match must be the subject of trademark registrations of national effect in at least three countries in each of at least three of the five ICANN regions.

(b) For first-round applicants, the registrations of national effect referenced in (a) above must have issued on before June 27, 2008.

(c) The .brand exemption is inapplicable to trademark owners whose principal business is the operation of a domain name registry, domain name registrar, or domain name reseller.

(d) The relationship between the .brand TLD and its customer/Registered Name Holder is defined by terms of service that encompasses a registration agreement and governs content, the bundling of services or the purchase of a product; membership in an organization or cooperative; maintenance of the terms of a contract, trademark license; or an appropriate combination of these factors.

(e) Second-level .brand domain name registrations in models 2 and 3 are held in trust by the TLD operator and are not delegated to a third-party user

(f) Second-level .brand domain name registrations in model 3 are delegated to the user, but under the quality control provisions of a trademark license agreement that allows the registry to terminate the registration at will

(g) Mixed-use gTLDs, where some names are held by the registry and other names registered to external parties are not exempt from CO/VI regulations.

IPC Objectives for suggestions:

These objectives have been included to facilitate discussion of possible solutions that may be different from what is prescribed above. These objectives have been included so the community may

understand the “spirit” of what is being proposed and understand what many brand owners have identified as helpful in the new gTLD process.. This proposal prescribes a delegation and distribution model for .brand gTLDs that:

- *global trade and trust by adapting to various business models of trademark holders*
- *guards consumers from potential harm through the reduction of phishing and fraud*
- *protects and honors intellectual property that conforms to international standards while not expanding any intellectual property right beyond that granted by the national governments issuing such rights*
- *encourages innovation within the new gTLD namespace*
- *allows rights holders (for profit and non-profit) to provide maximum value and choice to their customers and constituencies while maintaining strict quality control standards applicable to maintaining trademarks*
- *facilitates a cost effective and low-priced domain name alternative*
- *eliminates gaming through geographic and time restrictions on qualifying trademarks*
- *permits trademark owners to reap the benefits of .brand TLDs*

The IPC is proposing very narrow use cases that should have no, or very limited, impact on existing contracted parties. These cases only describe branded single registrant gTLDs and are limited to this context.

IPC looks forward to discussion of other clearly defined situations in which relaxation of strict separation (or non-discrimination) requirements may be appropriate and welcomes discussion and feedback on the above.

Objective 2: To review current and previous ICANN gTLD registry contracts and policies to identify the current and previous restrictions and practices concerning registry-registrar separation, and equivalent access and non-discriminatory access in place.

Objectives 2-4 describe work to be undertaken by the WG. IPC looks forward to commenting on this work once it is completed.

Objective 3: To identify and clearly articulate the changes to current cross-ownership arrangements contemplated by the options described in the most recent version of the DAG and supporting documents and considered by ICANN staff in connection with the planned introduction of new gTLDs.

Objective 4: To identify and clearly articulate the differences between the current restrictions and practices concerning registry-registrar separation and equal equivalent access, on the one hand, and the options described in the most recent version of the DAG and supporting documents¹ and changes considered by staff, on the other hand.

In addition, comments on any aspect related to the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars that you think should be taken into account by the Working Group as part of its deliberations are welcome. For example, comments may be submitted on: (i) recommended models for the New gTLD Program, (ii) the economic analysis conducted by economists retained by ICANN, including the CRA Report as well as the one recently submitted by Salop and Wright, (iii) the Board approved model proposed by the Board at the ICANN Meeting in Nairobi on 12 March 2010, or (iv) whether the restrictions currently applicable to existing gTLD registries should be changed, or (v) additional work that should be performed by the Working Group to recommend models for the New gTLD Program.

Background Information

- Review the Issues Report on Vertical Integration Between Registries and Registrars, please refer to <http://gnso.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/report-04dec09-en.pdf> [PDF, 254 KB].
- The ICANN Board resolution on Vertical Integration is posted at <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5>.
- To review the charter describing the policy work to be undertaken by the Vertical Integration Working Group, please refer to: <http://gnso.icann.org/issues/vertical-integration/vi-chartered-objectives-10mar10-en.pdf> [PDF, 41 KB].

- For information on the details of the implementation planning activities for new gTLDs, please refer to the documents posted at <http://icann.org/en/topics/new-gtld-program.htm>.
- For additional resources on the topic of vertical integration between registries and registrars, please refer to the documents posted at: https://st.icann.org/vert-integration-pdp/index.cgi?https_st_icann_org_vert_integration_pdp_index_cgi_vi_resources.

New gTLD Draft Guidebook v.2 Comments on Registry-Registrar Separation and Section 2.8 of the New gTLD Agreement v. 2 13 April 2009

The comments below are submitted on behalf of the gTLD Registries Constituency regarding Registry-Registrar Separation as well as Section 2.8 of the New gTLD Agreement contained within the Draft Applicant Guidebook Version 2 dated 18 February 2009. They begin with some general comments followed by definitions and a new Section 2.8. A minority position is stated at the end.

I. INITIAL COMMENTS

Drawing on its review of the economic principles and the history of the gTLDs, the authors of the CRAI Report¹ encouraged ICANN to re-examine the economic case for the separation requirement, and in particular to consider whether it might be possible to relax the once regulations have been pulled back,” CRAI encouraged ICANN to move slowly, but deliberately and in consultation with the industry, towards permitting integration of registry and registrar services under many, but not all, circumstances. In order to assist ICANN in determining how to slowly and deliberately introduce vertical integration, the CRAI Report recommended two possible test cases: The Hybrid TLD and the Single Registrant TLD. However, it cautioned that “ICANN may want to consider taking steps towards relaxing one or both of these requirements under certain, limited, conditions.” Further it argued that:

If ICANN should decide to go ahead with these test cases, it should be ready actively to monitor the performance of these new TLDs. If, after a reasonable period of time, ICANN is satisfied that competition is not being harmed – or, better, if it concludes that competition has been enhanced by their introductions, it may then want to consider relaxing one or both of the vertical separation and equal access requirements for a somewhat broader pool of TLDs.

Despite the plea by the CRAI Report to move slowly and deliberately only with the two test cases identified in the report, the ICANN staff, swayed by a few registrars seeking to enter the gTLD Registry market, ignored the authors of the CRAI Report and recommended an approach to the registry/registrar issue that is not only inconsistent with the CRAI Report, but is rife with so many loopholes that the solution is certain to be gamed by new registry operators, registrars, resellers and their technical back-end providers.

1 <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/crai-report-24oct08-en.pdf> 2

The gTLD Registries Constituency, however, submits that its proposal below is not only consistent with the limited exceptions set forth in the CRAI Report, but also believes that it has significantly reduced the potential loopholes existing in the current gTLD Agreements as well as the proposed language contained in Section 2.8 of the new gTLD Agreement contained within the Second Version of the Draft Applicant Guidebook.

II. SPECIFIC CONTRACTUAL PROVISIONS

A. Definitions

“Affiliate” shall mean a specified person or entity that directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls or is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified.

“control” (including the terms *“controlling”*, *“controlled by”* and *“under common control with”*) shall mean the possession, direct or indirect, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of voting or debt securities, by contract, or otherwise.

“Community-based TLD” shall mean a gTLD that (a) is operated for the benefit of a defined existing community consisting of a restricted population which self-identify as members of the community and (b) applied for the TLD on behalf of the existing community and was awarded the TLD on such basis. For purposes of Section 2.8, the following shall not be deemed to be a community: (i) a subscriber or customer base; (ii) a business and its affiliated entities and (iii) a country or other region that is represented by a ccTLD, or (iv) a language except in cases where the TLD directly relates to a UNESCO recognized language.

“single registrant” TLD shall mean a TLD in which (i) all domain name registrations are registered to a single person, business or other entity and not to any party other than the single person, business or other entity, and (ii) proxy and anonymous domain name registrations are not offered.

B. New Section 2.8

2.8 Use of Registrars. Registry Operator must use only ICANN accredited registrars in registering domain names. Affiliates of Registry Operator or of any entity providing Registry Services for the TLD may be ICANN-accredited registrars, provided that such Affiliates or entities providing Registry Services for the TLD may not distribute domain names in the TLD unless (i) the TLD is a “single registrant” TLD, or (ii) the TLD is “community-based”, provided however that in such event (a) the Affiliates or entities providing Registry Services for the Community-based TLD together may act as a distributor for no more than 50,000 names registered in the TLD and (b) neither Registry Operator nor any entity providing Registry Services for the Community-based TLD may themselves act as an authorized registrar, reseller or distributor of domain names within the TLD through the same entity that provides Registry Services for the TLD. Registry Operator must provide non-discriminatory access to Registry Services to all ICANN accredited registrars that enter into and are in compliance with Registry 3

Operator's registry-registrar agreement for the TLD. Registry Operator must use a uniform agreement with all registrars authorized to register names in the TLD, which may be revised by Registry Operator from time to time, provided however, that any such revisions must be approved in advance by ICANN.

C. Notes on Section 2.8

Note 1: The RyC believes that for true Single Registrant TLDs, as stated in the provision above, we do not necessarily believe that 50,000 names restriction must apply. However, until we can be sure that this cannot be gamed, we would recommend the ICANN setting the 50,000 name threshold, but allow the Single Registrant TLD to present to the ICANN Board any information why they believe the 50,000 name threshold may need to be exceeded (i.e., the TLD will be used by employees of a company with more than 50,000 employees). We would like input from the rest of the ICANN community to figure out other ways to stop the potential gaming of these restrictions.

Note 2: The restrictions we have placed in Section 2.8 are not limited to the official registry or registry operator that signs an Agreement with ICANN. Rather, the restrictions are towards ANY entity (or affiliate of any entity) providing Registry Services for the TLD. This would include back-end registry operators. It is only this type of restriction that will effectively put a stop to the gaming and prevent an argument from existing registrars (or affiliates of registrars) that since they are not the entity signing an agreement with ICANN. The RyC will submit in a separate paper its rationale for this.

Note 3: In addition, the restrictions above do not just apply to being a "registrar" in the TLD, but rather distributing domain names in the TLD as either a registrar, reseller or any other form of distributor. This too would close a "loop hole" that has existing in the Agreements to date. Note 4: The registries in support of this proposal have indicated that they would

imposing these restrictions on themselves if the RyC proposal is adopted by the ICANN Board for future TLDs; provided that existing sponsored TLDs are considered “Community-based TLDs” under the language above.

GNSO gTLD Registry Constituency Statement of Support Issue: Registry-Registrar

Separation Date: April 13, 2009 General RyC Information

§ Total # of eligible RyC Members²: 14

2 All top-level domain sponsors or registry operators that have agreements with ICANN to provide Registry Services in support of one or more gTLDs are eligible for membership upon the “effective date” set forth in the operator’s or sponsor’s agreement (Article III, Membership, ¶ 1). The RyC Articles of Operations can be found at http://www.gtldregistries.org/about_us/articles .

Total # of RyC Members: 14

§ Total # of Active RyC Members: 14

§ Minimum requirement for supermajority of Active Members: 10

§ Minimum requirement for majority of Active Members: 8

§ # of Members that participated in this process: 13

§ Names of Members that participated in this process:

1. Afiliás (.info)
2. DotAsia Organisation (.asia)
3. DotCooperation (.coop)
4. Employ Media (.jobs)
5. Fundació puntCAT (.cat)
6. mTLD Top Level Domain (.mobi)
7. Museum Domain Management Association – MuseDoma (.museum)
8. NeuStar (.biz)

9. Public Interest Registry (.org)
10. RegistryPro (.pro)
11. SITA (.aero)
12. Telnic (.tel)
13. The Travel Partnership Corporation – TTPC (.travel)
14. VeriSign (.com, .name & .net)

§ Names & email addresses for points of contact:

- o Chair: David Maher, dmaher@pir.org
- o Alternate Chair: Jeff Neuman, Jeff.Neuman@Neustar.us
- o Secretariat: Cherie Stubbs, Cherstubbs@aol.com

3 Per the RyC Articles of Operations, Article III, Membership, ¶ 4: Members shall be classified as “Active” or “Inactive”. A member shall be classified as “Active” unless it is classified as “Inactive” pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph. Members become Inactive by failing to participate in a Constituency meeting or voting process for a total of three consecutive meetings or voting processes or both, or by failing to participate in meetings or voting processes, or both, for six weeks, whichever is shorter. An Inactive member shall have all rights and duties of membership other than being counted as present or absent in the determination of a quorum. An Inactive member may resume Active status at any time by participating in a Constituency meeting or by voting.

Regarding the issue noted above, the level of support in the RyC is summarized below.

1. **Level of Support of Active Members:** Supermajority
 - 1.1. # of Members in Favor: 11
 - 1.2. # of Members Opposed: 2
 - 1.3. # of Members that Abstained: 1
 - 1.4. # of Members that did not vote: 0

2. Minority Position(s):

During the course of our deliberations, VeriSign, who voted against the gTLD Registries Constituency Statement had put forth the following as a new Section 2.8 (including definitions). This view, however, was not adopted by a Supermajority of the gTLD Registries Constituency. RegistryPro joins VeriSign in submitting this minority position, with additional comments added by RegistryPro at the end to clarify intent.

Comment on Section 2.8, Use of Registrars

We believe that in order to promote a competitive marketplace between TLDs, the Registry/Registrar Cross-Ownership rule must be applied in a uniform manner. This requires that the current rules be refined to eliminate existing loopholes by (i) adopting a clear definition of “affiliates”; and (ii) imposing consistency in the ownership restrictions faced by registries in owning registrars by applying the same restriction to registrars owning registries. Limiting Registry/Registrar cross-ownership promotes a level playing field. We believe that there should be no exceptions to the cross-ownership restrictions but would allow smaller registries (less than 50K names, e.g.) which are intended to serve smaller communities or a single business, and which would otherwise have a hard time attracting registrar support to work with either a single or a few unaffiliated ICANN-accredited registrars. We believe that at some size, even defined communities and single company TLDs should become a market option and should be treated as a non-restricted gTLD.

Accordingly, we would recommend that Section 2.8 be revised as follows:

2.8 Use of Registrars. (a) Registry Operator must use only ICANN-accredited registrars that are not Affiliates of the Registry Operator, in registering domain names within the TLD. Registry Operator must provide non-discriminatory access to Registry Services to all ICANN-accredited registrars that enter into and are in compliance with Registry Operator’s registry-registrar agreement for the TLD. Registry Operator must use a uniform agreement with all

registrars authorized to register names in the TLD, which may be revised by Registry Operator from time to time, provided however, that any such revisions must be approved in advance by ICANN. As long as the number of names registered in the TLD is no more than 50,000 and either (i) the TLD is a "single registrant" TLD, or (ii) the TLD is a "community-based" TLD, the Registry Operator may limit the number of ICANN accredited registrars with whom it enters into a registry-registrar agreement.

(b) "Affiliate" shall mean a specified person or entity that directly or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls or is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified.

(c) The term "control" (including the terms "controlling", "controlled by" and "under common control with") means the possession, direct or indirect, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of voting or debt securities, by contract, or otherwise.

(d) The term "single registrant" TLD shall mean a TLD in which (i) all domain name registrations are registered to a single person, business or other entity and not to any party other than the single person, business or other entity, and (ii) proxy and anonymous domain name registrations are not offered and (iii) no person, business or entity who is not an Affiliate is granted rights to use any of the domain names.

(e) The term "community-based" TLD shall mean a TLD that is operated for the benefit of a defined existing community consisting of a restricted population which self-identify as members of the community. The following shall not be deemed to be a community: (i) a subscriber or customer base; (ii) a business and its affiliated entities; (iii) a country or other region that is represented by a ccTLD; or (iv) a language except in cases where the TLD directly refers to a UNESCO-recognized language."

RegistryPro additional comment:

In the event that ICANN's resolution to this issue includes restricting the services that registries can provide, by ownership of registrars or otherwise, an exception for early stage,

small, community based and single owner registries ought to be considered so that these registries are not unduly constrained in their ability to distribute names.

ANNEX G - Excerpts from the Draft Applicant Guidebook v. 4

MODULE 1 Excerpt:

Restrictions on Registrar Cross-Ownership¹—Applications will not be considered from any of the following:

1. ICANN-accredited registrars or their Affiliates;
2. Entities controlling or Beneficially Owning more than 2% of any class of securities of an ICANN accredited registrar or any of its Affiliates; or
3. Entities where 2% or more of voting securities are beneficially owned by an ICANN-accredited registrar or any of its Affiliates.

Further, applications where the applicant has engaged an ICANN-accredited registrar, reseller, or any other form of distributor or any of their Affiliates (or any person or entity acting on their behalf) to provide any registry services for the TLD will not be approved.

“Affiliate” means a person or entity that, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified.

“Control” (including as used in the terms “controlled by” and “under common control with”) means the possession, directly or indirectly, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management or policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of securities, as trustee or executor, by serving as a member of a board of directors or equivalent governing body, by contract, by credit arrangement or otherwise.

A person or entity that possesses “Beneficial Ownership” of a security includes any person who, directly or indirectly, through any contract, arrangement, understanding, relationship, or otherwise has or shares (A) voting power which includes the power to vote, or to direct the voting of, such security; and/or (B) investment power which includes the power to dispose, or to direct the disposition of, such security.

¹ Note: The text in this section is possible implementation language resulting from the resolutions of the ICANN Board (adopted at the ICANN Meeting in Nairobi) with respect to the separation of registry and registrar functions and ownership <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5>.

During the recent Board Retreat in Dublin during May 2010, the Board reviewed possible issues that might result from a strict interpretation of the Board's resolutions. It was the sense of the Board that: 1) the draft proposed stricter limitations on cross ownership represents a "default position" and they continue to encourage the GNSO to develop a stakeholder-based policy on these issues; 2) a very strict interpretation of the resolutions might create unintended consequences; 3) staff should produce language in the agreement matching a "de minimus" acceptable approach (2% language) while remaining generally consistent with the resolutions; 4) the Board encourages community input and comment on the correct approach to these issues in the absence of GNSO policy; and 5) the Board will review this issue again if no GNSO policy results on these topics.

EXCERPT FROM THE REGISTRY AGREEMENT:

2.9 Use of Registrars* (see note below).

- (a) *Registry Operator must use only ICANN accredited registrars in registering domain names. Registry Operator and its Affiliates (or any person or entity acting on their behalf) shall not act as a registrar, reseller or any other form of distributor with respect to the TLD or any other top-level domain. Registry Operator must provide non-discriminatory access to registry services to all ICANN accredited registrars that enter into and are in compliance with Registry Operator's registry-registrar agreement for the TLD. Registry Operator must use a uniform non-discriminatory agreement with all registrars authorized to register names in the TLD, provided that such agreement may set forth non-discriminatory criteria for qualification to register names in the TLD that are reasonably related to the proper functioning of the TLD. Such agreement may be revised by Registry Operator from time to time, provided however, that any such revisions must be approved in advance by ICANN. This Section 2.9 shall not preclude Registry Operator from registering names within the TLD to itself through a request made to an ICANN-accredited registrar. [Registry Operator shall not engage or otherwise permit any registrar, reseller or any other form of distributor, or any of their Affiliates (or any person or entity acting on their behalf) to provide Registry Services for the TLD.]*
- (b) *Registry Operator and its Affiliates shall not, directly or indirectly: (i) control any ICANN-accredited registrar or its Affiliates, (ii) control or acquire greater than 2% Beneficial Ownership of any class of securities of any ICANN-accredited registrar or its Affiliates, (iii) be controlled by, or be under common control with, any ICANN-accredited registrar or its Affiliates, or (iv) except as set forth below in this sub-clause (b), sell or otherwise transfer any interest in any security of Registry Operator or its Affiliates to any ICANN-accredited registrar or its Affiliates. Nothing withstanding sub-clause (b)(iv) above, Registry Operator may sell voting securities to any ICANN-accredited registrar or its Affiliates, provided that any such sale will not result in such*

registrar or its Affiliates owning greater than 2% of Registry Operator's outstanding voting securities.

- (c) *For the purposes of this Section 2.9: (i) "Affiliate" means a person or entity that, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified, (ii) "control" (including the terms "controlled by" and "under common control with") means the possession, directly or indirectly, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management or policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of securities, as trustee or executor, by serving as a member of a board of directors or equivalent governing body, by contract, by credit arrangement or otherwise, and (iii) a person or entity that possesses "Beneficial Ownership" of a security includes any person who, directly or indirectly, through any contract, arrangement, understanding, relationship, or otherwise has or shares (A) voting power which includes the power to vote, or to direct the voting of, such security; and/or (B) investment power which includes the power to dispose, or to direct the disposition of, such security.]*

4 MAY 2010 DRAFT NEW GTLD AGREEMENT SPECIFICATIONS SUBJECT TO PUBLIC
COMMENT

* Final text will be posted on ICANN website; agreement reference to be replaced by hyperlink.

* *Note: The text in this section is possible implementation language resulting from the resolutions of the ICANN Board (adopted at the ICANN Meeting in Nairobi) with respect to the separation of registry and registrar functions and ownership*
<<http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5>>. During the recent Board Retreat in Dublin during May 2010, the board reviewed possible issues that might result from a strict interpretation of the Board's resolutions. It was the sense of the Board that: 1) the draft proposed stricter limitations on cross ownership represents a "default position" and they continue to encourage the GNSO to develop a stakeholder based policy on these issues; 2) a very strict interpretation of the resolutions might create unintended consequences; 3) staff should produce language in the agreement matching a "de minimus"

acceptable approach (2% language) while remaining generally consistent with the resolutions; 4) the Board encourages community input and comment on the correct approach to these issues in the absence of GNSO policy; and 5) the Board will review this issue again if no GNSO policy results on these topics.

ANNEX H - Charter of the Vertical Integration Working Group

Chartered objectives for the Working Group:

Preamble: The working group on vertical integration shall evaluate and propose policy recommendations for new gTLDs and existing gTLDs. The working group expects to define the range of restrictions on vertical separation that are currently in effect, to serve as a baseline to evaluate future proposals.

Objective 1: To make policy recommendations that provide clear direction to ICANN staff and new gTLD applicants on whether, and if so under what conditions, contracts for new gTLD registries can permit vertical integration or otherwise deviate from current forms of registry-registrar separation, and equivalent access and non-discriminatory access.

Objective 2: To review current and previous ICANN gTLD registry contracts and policies to identify the current and previous restrictions and practices concerning registry-registrar separation, and equivalent access and non-discriminatory access in place.

Objective 3: To identify and clearly articulate the changes to current cross-ownership arrangements contemplated by the options described in the most recent version of the DAG and supporting documents and considered by ICANN staff in connection with the planned introduction of new gTLDs.

Objective 4: To identify and clearly articulate the differences between the current restrictions and practices concerning registry-registrar separation and equal equivalent access, on the one hand, and the options described in the most recent version of the DAG and supporting documents¹ and changes considered by staff, on the other hand.

Objective 5: Determine as best as possible, to the extent reasonable in the time given, the potential impacts of any recommendations on any affected parties.

Objective 6: To perform the PDP activities in a manner that does not delay the launch of the New GTLD Program.

Objective 7: WG shall examine relationship, if any, between VI and CO.

Working Definitions to be used by the Working Group²

"Vertical Integration" (VI) is defined as a business structure in which there is no separation between the Registry Operator and the registrar in relation to a particular gTLD. They are either owned or controlled by the same company or have another contractual affiliation

that controls the specific gTLD, and the Registry Operator is not required to provide equivalent access and non-discriminatory access to non-affiliated registrars to sell names under its gTLD.

"Cross ownership" (CO) is defined as the controlling ownership of a share of a registry by a registrar, or vice-versa.

"Minority Interest" is defined as the minority ownership of a share of a registry by a registrar, or vice-versa.

1 The working group understands that the DAG is a fluid document. As a result, the working group will conduct its activities based upon the version of the document available.

- 1 The working definitions included in this charter are subject to further development and refinement but are included in the interests of time in order to allow the remainder of the charter to be finalized and approved by the GNSO Council.

Operating procedures for the Working Group

The Working Group will operate according to the guidelines set out in the Draft Working guidelines of 5 Feb 2010.

Milestones From Charter Approval Date 2

Week	Dates	Tasks/Goals
1-2	26 Mar	Original recruitment for group members will go out to the constituencies and the ICANN community.
1-3	2 Apr	Staff begins documentation on existing approaches and practices, differentiating among Vertical Integration, Joint Marketing approaches.
2	22 Mar	Group begins work.
3-5	16 April	Collect Constituency/SG statements and community comments.
5-7	30 April	Review of existing documents and commentary.
16 April		Publish Staff document on existing approaches and practices.
6-8	7 May	Review staff document and constituency and public comments.
9-11	28 May	Discuss conditions under which various practices are appropriate.
9-12	4 Jun	Discuss and document policy recommendations.
16	30 Jun	Final Report to Council and out for public review.

² Assuming Council Approval on 10 Mar

ANNEX I - Results of Brussels Face-to-Face Meetings

Results of Brussels Face-to-Face Meetings

The Working Group held two face-to-face meetings during the 2010 ICANN Meetings held in Brussels. The sessions involved breaking the Working Group into three sub-groups that reflected diverse opinions on the issues (based on prior polling of the Working Group). The sub-groups described (and ranked) the most important elements of a proposal (known in the group as “atoms”) and were then asked to assemble those elements into new combinations (“molecules”) as a means of discovering areas of agreement that might lead to a new consensus view.

The Working Group produced two such “molecules” that eventually became known as Brussels 1 (BRU1) and Brussels 2 (BRU2) and are presented below. While the effort did not lead to a breakthrough on consensus, it did spark considerable discussion.

It should be noted that these reflect the opinions of a subset of the Working Group. There were two barriers to participation. First, remote participation was impossible due to the nature and structure of the activity. That ruled out WG members who could not attend the ICANN meeting. Second, the meetings were scheduled at times that conflicted with other GNSO Council meetings, making it impossible for some members to participate in the sessions even though they were in Brussels at the time.

BRUSSELS OPTION #1

(BRU1)

1. LIMITS SHOULD APPLY ACROSS ALL TLDS.

There was strong consensus that rules and limits should apply across all TLDs, regardless of the TLD offered by the registry or registrar in question. For example, BRU1 does not believe the .COM registry operator should be allowed to own more than 15% of, or control, a registrar offering TLDs other than .COM. BRU1 opposes any exception that would allow a registrar to own >15% of a registry if that registrar promised not to offer its registry's TLD (or vice versa). In this respect, BRU1 supports the Nairobi Board/ DAG 4 provision that places restrictions across all TLDs.

The basis for this position is the strong belief that making such an exception would be close to allowing 100% cross-ownership in the same TLD. Also, it reflects a belief that ICANN staff are not resourced or trained to properly control the many and varied gaming scenarios affiliated registrars could employ to promote or sell the names in their registry's TLD (or attempt to damage the names of another registry's TLD). In BRU1's view it would not just be a matter of trying to identify and monitor all the varied registrar and reseller operations owned by the registrar's parent company. There would also be myriad bundling, cross-marketing and promotional methods by which the affiliated registrar could circumvent the safeguard. BRU1 believes this is why existing contracts effectively limit cross ownership of registries and registrars at 15% -- regardless of the TLDs they offer.

2. NO CONTROL REGARDLESS OF OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE. There can be no control (as defined by DAG 4 – essentially the ability to direct policy) between a registrar and a registry, or between a registry and a registrar, regardless of cross ownership percentages.

3. 15% OWNERSHIP LIMIT. In addition to 2. (above), there can be no more than 15%

ownership of a registry by a registrar, or a registrar by a registry. This limit recognizes that, even absent control, a registry may be incented to favor a registrar with whom they have significant cross-ownership (BRU1 defined significant as 15%). This limit applies regardless of the TLDs offered by the registry/ registrar combination in question.

4. SINGLE REGISTRANT/ SINGLE USER TLD EXCEPTION. A Single Registrant Single User (SRSU) TLD is one where the registry sets a policy where second level names can only be registered to the registry (i.e. the registry is the registrant for all names). Also, the use of those names in terms of website content, email control, or any other application associated with the domains, is exercised only by the registry. As a practical matter this means the registry is not providing second level names to other parties (who would have control over website content, email use, etc). We believe the registry contract in the current DAG already provides for this type of registry via the schedule of registry reserved names (which could be added to as the registry and ICANN agree). If there is perceived ambiguity about the applicability of this contract provision we believe the contract should be amended to explicitly allow for this type of SRSU TLD. If the DAG cannot be amended in this way, we believe there should be an exception to rules 1. to 3. (above) that allows the SRSU registry to have: (1) 100% ownership/ control of a registrar in their TLD; and (ii) no obligation to provide equal access to other registrars.

5. Registry Service Providers (RSPs – also known as back-end technical providers). BRU1 did not have consensus about the applicability of rules 1. to 3. to RSPs. A proposal was made that if RSPs undertook a form of RSP accreditation with ICANN, and agreed to a set of significant sanctions directly with ICANN (should they be in breach of their obligations for such things as data integrity) that BRU1 might recommend an exception for 100% control of RSPs by registrars (or vice versa). Such an 'amendment' is not yet agreed by BRU1 - but there is considerable interest in it.

QUESTIONS:

What is the best way to prevent gaming in a cross-owned entity -- percentage ownership caps, restrictions on control, both or something else?

- The most effective way to reduce gaming and prevent harms is to have clearly defined and easily understood ‘bright-line’ rules regarding ownership and control. BRU1 does not believe, in the context of a very largely expanded universe of TLDs/registries/ registrars/ new issues, that ICANN have the resources or capabilities to properly manage compliance unless ownership and control rules are extremely clear-cut. Exceptions should be minimal and only when justified by strong evidence in support of **registrant** interests. In particular, BRU1 does not believe ICANN has the ability to properly manage an exception based on registrars not offering the TLD of their affiliated registry.

Do the benefits of increased competition (registrars becoming registries or back-end service providers) outweigh the potential risks of gaming from a cross-owned entity, or vice-versa?

- BRU1 believes there will be significantly increased competition (as compared to the current marketplace) regardless of the ownership restrictions applied to new TLDs. For example, BRU1 believes that even with very restrictive rules, such as the DAG 4 language, there will be significantly improved competition over the current marketplace. Given this, and the absence of precise studies regarding harms, BRU1 favors a continuation of the current, 15% convention in cross-ownership across all TLDs.

Should a registry be able to own a registrar, and vice versa, provided it doesn't distribute its own TLD?

- No. As detailed above, BRU1 strongly believes that limits should apply regardless of the TLDs offered by the registry or registrar. The basis for this position is the strong belief that making such an exception would be equivalent to allowing 100% cross-ownership within the TLD, and a belief that ICANN staff are not resourced or trained to properly control the many and varied gaming scenarios affiliated registrars could employ to promote or sell the names in their registry's TLD (or attempt to damage the names of competing registry's TLDs).
- In BRU1's view it would not just be a matter of trying to identify and monitor all the varied registrar and reseller operations owned by the registrar's parent company. There would also be myriad bundling, cross-marketing and promotional methods by which the affiliated registrar could circumvent the safeguard. BRU1 believes this is why existing contracts effectively limit cross ownership of registries and registrars at 15% -- regardless of the TLDs they offer.

What is an acceptable level of cross-ownership (0 - 100%) if self-distribution is permitted?

- 15%, which is consistent with the majority of existing contracts. For the reasons detailed in the preceding paragraphs we do not view rules limiting self-distribution as enforceable. In addition, there are potential harms from such cross-ownership unrelated to whether or not the affiliated registrar distributes its own registry's TLD.

What is an acceptable level of cross-ownership (0 - 100%) if self-distribution is prohibited?

- 15%, which is consistent with the majority of existing contracts. For the reasons detailed in the preceding paragraphs we do not view rules limiting self-distribution as enforceable. In addition, there are potential harms from such cross-ownership unrelated to whether or not the affiliated registrar distributes its own registry's TLD.

Should a registry be able to control a registrar, and vice versa, provided it doesn't distribute its own TLD?

- No, for the all reasons detailed in responses to the questions above, BRU1 believes any exception for *'doesn't distribute in its own TLD'* is both unwise and unworkable.

Absent an arbitrary restriction on percentage of cross-ownership, what constitutes control?

- BRU1 did not discuss this in detail, but there is a sense that the DAG4 definition of control is workable (i.e. – the ability to set policies or direct management).

What restrictions should be put in place to prevent control? Do these vary if self-distribution is prohibited?

- Establishing a 15% baseline maximum for cross ownership across all TLDs will prevent the overwhelming majority of likely control situations. Although it is possible to have control below 15%, in practice this limit is likely to prevent the majority of control situations.

Is ICANN capable of enforcing contract compliance to prevent gaming in a cross-owned entity?

- BRU1 believes that in the greatly expanded universe of TLDs/registries/ registrars/ new issues, ICANN will not have the resources or capabilities to properly manage compliance unless ownership and control rules are extremely clear-cut. Exceptions should be minimal and only when justified by strong evidence in support of **registrant** interests. In particular, BRU1 does not believe ICANN has the ability to properly manage an exception based on registrars not offering the TLD of their affiliated registry.

Specifically, should Registry Service Providers be required to enter into contracts with ICANN?

- BRU1 considered, and has some support for, an exception under which RSPs could become accredited. If this exception was granted, and we recognize there is work to be done on this, BRU1 might endorse an exception that allowed >15% cross ownership between RSPs and registrars. I should also note that there were some members of BRU1 who were strongly opposed to such an exception.

Should other entities (e.g., Resellers) also be required to enter into contracts with ICANN?

- BRU1 did not consider or recommend reseller contracts with ICANN.

Permitted for Single-Registrant, Single-User (SRSU) TLDs?

- Yes, per Section 4. of BRU1 proposal

Permitted for "orphaned" TLDs that can't get registrar distribution?

- Not discussed in detail, but some support for this exception.

Permitted for "community" TLDs?

- Not discussed in detail, but some support for this exception.

Should there be numeric caps for any or all of these?

- Not discussed.

Should the results of this first-phase VI-WG PDP be limited to the first round of new TLDs only?

- Yes, lessons will be learned and applied to the second round.

BRUSSELS OPTION #2

(BRU2)

1. LIMITS DO NOT APPLY ACROSS TLDS

A registry operator or registry services provider that does not distribute its own TLD should not be restricted from acting as a registrar in other TLDs. An existing registrar should not be prohibited from becoming a new TLD registry just because it sells other TLDs. The potential harms of registry sharing data with an affiliated reseller or friendly registrar can be addressed via contract and ICANN compliance and enforcement mechanisms, provided resources and commitment are present. The benefit of new entrants, including existing registrars, outweighs the potential harms from cross-ownership if no self-distribution is permitted.

2. CONTROL/OWNERSHIP

Cross-ownership up to 100% is permitted provided there is no distribution of own TLD. An existing registrar should be permitted to become a new TLD registry and own up to 100% provided they don't act as their own registrar. Separation of functionality and no self-distribution make restrictions on cross-ownership unnecessary provided ICANN enforces contracts.

3. OWNERSHIP LIMITS

No ownership limit if cross-owned entity doesn't distribute its own TLD. De minimus limit (5%) if cross-owned entity distributes own TLD.

4. EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions should be allowed for single-registrant/single user, orphaned TLDs, and possibly others TBD. A procedure should be established for applicants to request exceptions based

on business model and to ensure ability to take TLD to market if no other registrars agree to offer and/or market the TLD.

5. REGISTRY SERVICE PROVIDERS

Registry Service Providers should have the same restrictions as Registry Operators.

6. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

We spent a significant portion of our time discussing compliance, audit, and enforcement procedures. Our group felt that a "serious" structure would be required, but would be capable of deterring bad actors with significant but tiered penalties.

- Any significant co-ownership would require “serious disclosure requirements to ICANN” including:
 - Must disclose all shareholders above _ % (specific percentage not agreed upon)
 - Must disclose voting powers
 - Must disclose all officers and directors (of both entities)
 - Must disclose all contracts for material registry services;
 - Must disclose physical infrastructure.
 - Must disclose all key/material subcontracts.

There was a discussion and thought that these disclosures should be public, to allow a public role in the monitoring process (reducing costs for ICANN) and consistent with disclosures in some other industries.

In addition to serious and substantial disclosures, BRU2 laid out other requirements

- Audits to demonstrate compliance with restrictions.

- Self-certifications that the requisite disclosures had been done in full, and the restrictions voluntarily and fully complied with.
- Opportunity for third party complaints/reporting violations.
- Enforcement:
 - There must be tiered levels of enforcement- dependent on violation/context and harm.
 - Tiered levels of enforcement should be created dependent on the violation and harm.
 - Enforcement must be timely.
 - There must be meaningful penalties and sanctions for violations.
 - Publication of known deficiencies and the enforcement actions which followed.

Questions:

What is the best way to prevent gaming in a cross-owned entity -- percentage ownership caps, restrictions on control, both or something else?

- BRU2 maintains and strictly enforces functional separation of registries and registrars and equal access requirements.
- BRU2 prevents cross-owned entities from selling registrations in their own TLD, except in SRSU and orphaned TLD cases.
- BRU2 prohibits a registry from owning or controlling more than a de minimus share (5%) of a registrar distributing its own TLD.
- BRU2 allows 100% cross-ownership provided there is no self-distribution.
- BRU2 recognizes the need for an effective compliance and enforcement regime, including severe penalties for violators.

Do the benefits of increased competition (registrars becoming registries or back-end service providers) outweigh the potential risks of gaming from a cross-owned entity, or vice-versa?

- BRU2 considers the benefits of increased competition, specifically allowing registrars to become registries, as more valuable than the potential risks of gaming from a cross-owned entity if that cross-owned entity was also prohibited from self-distribution.
- BRU2 recognizes the need for an effective compliance and enforcement regime, including severe penalties for violators, and that such a regime would adequately address the risks of gaming and data-sharing.

Common ownership

Should a registry be able to own a registrar, and vice versa, provided it doesn't distribute its own TLD?

- Yes, BRU2 says 100% cross-ownership is allowable if self-distribution is prohibited..

What is an acceptable level of cross-ownership (0 - 100%) if self-distribution is permitted?

- BRU2 says de minimus (5%) is allowable when self-distribution is permitted.

What is an acceptable level of cross-ownership (0 - 100%) if self-distribution is prohibited?

- BRU2 says 100% cross-ownership is allowable if self-distribution is prohibited.

Control

Should a registry be able to control a registrar, and vice versa, provided it doesn't distribute its own TLD?

- BRU2 says yes, 100% cross-ownership and control is allowed with no self-distribution.

Absent an arbitrary restriction on percentage of cross-ownership, what constitutes control?

- BRU2 did not address the definition of control.

What restrictions should be put in place to prevent control? Do these vary if self-distribution is prohibited?

- BRU2 did not address restrictions on control.

Enforcement and compliance

Is ICANN capable of enforcing contract compliance to prevent gaming in a cross-owned entity?

- BRU2 assumes that ICANN is capable of enforcing contract compliance, provided the rules and restrictions are clearly defined.

Scope

Should the scope of ICANN contracts be increased?

- BRU2 identified the need for expanded/enhanced contractual language to prevent gaming and data-sharing.

Specifically, should Registry Service Providers be required to enter into contracts with ICANN?

- BRU2 said cross-ownership and self-distribution restrictions should be extended to Registry Service Providers, but did not recommend new contracts with ICANN for those entities.

Should other entities (eg Resellers) also be required to enter into contracts with ICANN?

- BRU2 did not consider or recommend reseller contracts with ICANN.

Exceptions to cross-ownership and self-distribution restrictions

Permitted for Single-Registrant, Single-User (SRSU) TLDs?

- BRU2 allows an exception for SRSU TLDs.

Permitted for "orphaned" TLDs that can't get registrar distribution?

- BRU2 allows an exception for orphaned TLDs.

Permitted for "community" TLDs?

- BRU did not address a specific exception for “community” TLDs.

Should there be numeric caps for any or all of these?

- BRU2 did not address specific numerical caps for exceptions.

Interim solution

Should the results of this first-phase VI-WG PDP be limited to the first round of new TLDs only?

- BRU considers the first phase of the VI-WG PDP as applying only to the first round of new TLDs.

ANNEX J - VI Proposed Definitions

Draft: Definitions for GNSO Vertical Integration Working Group

1 June 2010

Affiliate: a person or entity that, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified

Beneficial Ownership: a person or entity that possesses “Beneficial Ownership” of a security includes any person who, directly or indirectly, through any contract, arrangement, understanding, relationship, or otherwise has or shares (A) voting power which includes the power to vote, or to direct the voting of, such security; and/or (B) investment power which includes the power to dispose, or to direct the disposition of, such security.

Control: the possession, directly or indirectly, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management or policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of securities, as trustee or executor, by serving as a member of a board of directors or equivalent governing body, by contract, by credit arrangement or otherwise.

Criteria for Selection of Registrars: criteria a registry might be permitted to use to determine whether to qualify a registrar to serve as a registrar for the TLD.

Cross-ownership: a situation where one firm has a partial or complete ownership interest in another entity, whether or not the ownership interest enables the firm to control or influence the decisions of the other entity. See also Vertical Integration.

Exclusive Dealing: contracts by which a registrar agrees to act solely as registrar for a single registry, or a registry agrees to accept registrations solely from a single registrar.

ICANN-Accredited Registrar: a company that enters into a Registrar Accreditation Agreement with ICANN.

Minority Interest: a stock or investment interest in a company or venture that is neither a controlling interest nor a majority interest.

Minority Stockholders: those stockholders of a corporation with a minority interest who do not control the corporation.

Registered Name Holder: (also referred to as a registrant) the person or organization that enters a registration agreement with a registrar.

Registrar: a company that contracts with Registered Name Holders and with a Registry Operator and collects registration data about the Registered Name Holders and submits registration information for entry in the Registry.

Registrar Services: domain registration services provided by a registrar in connection with a TLD as to which it has an agreement with the TLD's Registry Operator, and includes contracting with Registered Name Holders, collecting registration data about the Registered Name Holders, and submitting registration information for entry in the Registry Database.

Registry: the database of all domain names registered in each top-level domain.

Registry Infrastructure Provider: (also referred to as Registry Back-End Operator) a term sometimes used to refer to an entity to which the Registry Operator has contracted some or all of its Registry Services functions.

Registry Operator: the entity entering the registry agreement with ICANN.

Registry Services: 1) Operations of the registry critical to the following tasks: (i) the receipt of data from registrars concerning registrations of domain names and name servers; (ii) provision to registrars of status information relating to the zone servers for the TLD; (iii) dissemination of TLD zone files; (iv) operation of the registry zone servers; and (v) dissemination of contact and other information concerning domain name server registrations in the TLD as required by the registry agreement; and (2) other products or services that the registry operator is required to provide because of the establishment of a consensus policy; and (3) any other products or services that only a registry operator is capable of providing, by reason of its designation as the registry operator.

Reseller: a person or entity that acts as an agent to, or a retailer for, a registrar or registrars to bring in customers or domain-name registrations, and in some cases to provide some registrar services.

Vertical Contract: an agreement between a registry and registrar (and/or potentially a third party or parties) concerning promotion, favored placement of a TLD or a registrar, or other services. Vertical contracts may lead to similar effects as vertical integration.

Vertical Integration: Cross-ownership or control by a firm of facilities or entities that operate at multiple levels of production and/or distribution in the chain from raw materials to the ultimate consumer. In the context of domain-name registration: cross-ownership involving a registry and a registrar of domain names or a registry infrastructure provider in one or more TLDs (whether or not the vertically integrated registrar competes with other registrars in that TLD). Note also: vertical contracts can have effects similar to vertical integration.

Vertical Integration with Exclusivity: A situation where a vertically integrated registry/registrar is the only registrar for the TLD.

ANNEX K - Proposal Matrix

A complete version of the proposal matrix available in Microsoft Excel format at:
https://st.icann.org/vert-integration-pdp/index.cgi?initial_report_snapshots

ANNEX L – Summary of Public Comment Forum on the Initial Report

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT ON INITIAL REPORT ON INITIAL REPORT ON VERTICAL INTEGRATION BETWEEN REGISTRARS AND REGISTRIES

Disclaimer

This summary is not a full and complete recitation of the relevant comments received. It is an attempt to capture in broad terms the nature and scope of the comments. This summary has been prepared in an effort to highlight key elements of these submissions in an abbreviated format, not to replace them. Every effort has been made to avoid mischaracterizations and to present fairly the views provided. Any failure to do so is unintentional. The comments may be viewed in their entirety at: <http://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/#vi-pdp-initial-report>

I. Summary and analysis of public comments for the Initial Report on Vertical Integration Between Registrars and Registries

Comment period ended:	12 August 2010
Summary published:	18 August 2010
Prepared by:	Margie Milam, Senior Policy Counselor

II. BACKGROUND

The GNSO Council has commenced a policy development process (PDP) on the topic of vertical integration between registrars and registries. The GNSO Council formed a working group to evaluate whether any policy recommendations should be developed on the topic of vertical integration between registrars and registries affecting both new gTLDs and existing gTLDs. The Initial Report describes several proposals regarding vertical integration that have been developed and analyzed by the VI Working Group for the New gTLDs. No proposal included in the Initial Report has achieved consensus support within the VI Working Group. These proposals were included for the purpose of seeking public comment and will be subject to further analysis and debate as the VI Working Group continues to strive to develop a consensus position to recommend to the GNSO Council on an expedited basis.

III. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Twenty-two contributions were received in the Public Comment Forum on the Vertical Integration (VI) Initial Report. Two Stakeholder Groups and three Constituencies submitted statements. These five statements are provided in **Annex A** of this Summary.

The following contributors participated in the Public Comment Forum (listed in alphabetical order):

<u>Name:</u>	<u>On Behalf of:</u>
Nacho Amadoz	puntCAT
Eric Brunner-Williams	dotNAI Project
Steve DelBianco	Business Constituency (BC)
Keith Drazek	VeriSign, Inc.
Jeff Eckhaus	Demand Media
Brett Fausett	Adorno, Yoss, Alvarado & Smith
Volker Greimann	Key-Systems GmbH
Debra Hughes	American Red Cross
Ashe-lee Jegathesan	Melbourne IT
George Kirikos	Leap of Faith Financial Services Inc.
David Lesvenan	ECLID
David Maher	Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG)
Naomasa Maruyama	Japan Network Information Center (JPNIC)
Michele Neylon	Blacknight Solutions
Constantine Roussos	Applicant for .MUSIC
Glen de Saint Géry	ISPCP Constituency
Daniel Schindler	Himself
J. Scott Evans	IPC
Antony Van Couvering	Minds + Machines
Jean Christophe Vignes	EuroDNS SA
Clarke Walton	Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG)
Christopher Wilkinson	Himself

As described in more detail below, the following observations can be reached from the comments submitted in the VI Public Comment Forum:

- ICANN should quickly resolve the issue of Vertical Separation
- No consensus is likely to emerge from the VI Working Group in favor of any of the substantive models discussed in the Initial Report
- There is generally no support for the models reflected in the Nairobi Board Resolution and DAG v.4
- There is general support for the Key Principles described in the Initial Report that:
- - Certain new gTLDs likely to be applied for in the first round may be unnecessarily impacted by restrictions on cross-ownership or control
 - A process should be adopted that would allow applicants to request exceptions in the event ICANN adopts a strict separation model and have them considered on a case-by-case basis

- Single Registrant, Single User TLDs (SRSUs) should be explored further
- Recognized the need for enhanced compliance efforts and the need for a detailed compliance plan to enforce any vertical integration restrictions adopted by ICANN
- There are general concerns regarding adopting a model that requires involvement of national competition authorities that may not understand or have experience with the domain name marketplace.

This Summary only reflects the comments submitted to the Public Comment Forum on the Initial Report. Additional comments related to the topic of vertical integration submitted in the Public Comment Forum on the Draft Applicant Guidebook v.4 are not summarized below, but instead are incorporated by reference.²⁵

IV. GENERAL COMMENTS

Policies that prevent registries and registrars from owning each other limit competition and thus negatively affect consumers by denying them better prices and services. *Demand Media Comments, submitted by Jeff Eckhaus on 12 Aug 2010.*

The exploit of the present – is the masquerade by existing contracted parties that they are the “applicants,” and their interests substitute for the interests of applicants who seek to enter into a registry operations contract and begin service to registrants through registrars. The allocation of benefits to existing beneficiaries of past economically, geographically, culturally, and linguistically limited grants of contract is not a substitute for expanding service beyond the legacy monopoly and the beneficiaries of the 2001 and 2004 new gTLD rounds. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

The vertical integration debate only exists because ICANN plans to allocate new TLDs in a way that harms the public interest – i.e., giving the “surplus” to registry operators, not to consumers. This results from the fact that price caps continue not to exist in the latest DAG. Instead, TLDs should be allocated via a regular tender process, whereby the registry applicant offering the lowest price wins the contract for a set period and without presumptive renewal. Consumers would then receive most of the benefit. *Vertical Integration comments by Leap of Faith Financial Services Inc., submitted by George Kirikos on 10 Aug 2010.*

1. ICANN should quickly resolve the issue of Vertical Separation

²⁵ To review the comments pertaining to the Draft Applicant Guidebook, please refer to: <http://forum.icann.org/lists/4gtld-guide/>

The ISPCP is concerned that introducing new issues that require suitable compliance and enforcement to be made available by ICANN, could result in further delays to the New gTLD application timeline. Given the two year delay that has already occurred in order to address the “overarching issues” that emerged, it would not seem appropriate to follow a course that might result in additional delays and postponements. *ISPCP Constituency Statement, submitted by Tony Harris on 11 Aug 2010.*

The debate over registrar-registry separation for New TLDs has gone on for over two years, which has negatively impacted consumer and public interests by indeterminately delaying the introduction of New TLDs. ICANN should now quickly and firmly resolve the question. *Registrar Stakeholder Group Comments - Vertical Integration Initial Report, submitted by Clarke Walton on 13 Aug 2010.*

ICANN’s Board should decide the matter – and should do so quickly, because delays in deciding this issue, since the Board approved the new TLD policy, have harmed the public interest and ICANN's credibility. *Comments of Daniel Schindler on 11 Aug 2010.*

The issue before ICANN is should communities defer submitting applications until there is an exception to a “Vertical Integration” policy that benefits others. If so, their needs are subordinated to the drawn out machinations of policy development for registrars that wish to capture registries and registries that wish to capture registrars, *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

It would not be productive – and would be a source of further delay - to link the current round of applications for new gTLDs with fundamental changes in the ICANN business model. Rather, we should be talking about limited exceptions to accommodate initially small start-up registries. *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

2. No Consensus Likely to Emerge from the VI Working Group

The Interim Report reflects no consensus for any of the proposals. The Registries Stakeholder Group (RySg) also recognizes that, due to the significant and entrenched differences among the large number of participants, full consensus may never be realized. *Statement of the Registries Stakeholder Group, submitted by David Maher on 11 Aug 2010.*

It is clear that that the community will not reach a consensus on vertical integration. *Comments of Daniel Schindler submitted on 11 Aug 2010.*

Verisign remains committed to continued efforts to reach consensus for later rounds of new TLDs, but recognizes that the VI-WG is unlikely to do so in time for the first round. *Verisign Comments, submitted by Keith Drazek on 11 August 2010.*

Key-Systems recognizes that the VI-WG is unlikely to reach a consensus in the short term, but firmly believes that the first round of applications will be the defining round for future launches and the restriction on participation of certain types of applicants will effectively shut out such applicants in subsequent rounds as well. *Comments of Key-*

Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010. Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.

Policy development has been going on for 30 months, with no sign of consensus, and could easily go on for another 30 months, or longer. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

The Working Group has achieved nothing even close to consensus. It is astonishing how resistant it is to coalescence. It is going to be up to the Board to cut the Gordian knot and make a decision. In developing a solution, the solution needs to be justifiable in a common sense way. The solution should not try to be Solomonic by trying to cut the baby in half. The rules need to keep things strictly separate, or very open. The solution needs to be based on principles, not on trying to please everyone, or one party in particular. The solution needs to be based on evidence and logic. The Board needs to be very, very careful of undue lobbying and influence. *Comments of Minds + Machines, submitted by Antony Van Couvering on 13 Aug 2010.*

V. KEY PRINCIPLES DEVELOPED BY THE VI WORKING GROUP

A. General Observations.

The ISPCP notes that the report states that there is general acceptance within the WG, for the “*Key Principles Developed by the VI Working Group*”. Whereas the issues these principles address are unquestionably important, they nonetheless raise some concerns within the ISPCP. *ISPCP Constituency Statement, submitted by Tony Harris on 11 Aug 2010.*

B. Certain new gTLDs likely to be applied for in the first round may be unnecessarily impacted by restrictions on cross-ownership or control .

The IPC believes there may be other single registrant registries that would be unduly restricted by the current ban on vertical integration and/or cross-ownership between Registries and Registrars. The IPC hopes to be able to collaborate with other constituencies and stakeholder groups to come up with a framework for a workable exception to the prohibition to vertical integration that can be presented to the VI working group for inclusion in its final report. *Statement of the Intellectual Property Constituency, submitted by J. Scott Evans on 12 August 2010.*

1. Special Considerations Needed for Linguistic and Cultural TLDs.

PuntCat believes that a model of Registrar Registry separation is, as a default model, the best approach to ensure benefits to end users. However, such a model might restrain innovation and consumers ‘choice in certain cases, such as small community-based linguistic and cultural top level domains (lcTLD), and that these specific cases should be addressed appropriately. *Nacho Amadoz, on behalf of puntCAT submitted on 7 Aug 2010.*

The one-size-fits-all approach might not adequately cover lcTLDs' specific characteristics and focus on their sponsoring communities. And forcing lcTLDs to operate under that default model could precisely create the market distortions and restrictions vertical separation was originally intended to eliminate. *Nacho Amadoz, on behalf of puntCAT submitted on 7 Aug 2010.*

PuntCAT believes that by giving lcTLDs the capacity to run an ICANN accredited registrar, with the appropriate thresholds and check and balance systems, would create the development of a more competitive market for these TLDs. *Nacho Amadoz, on behalf of puntCAT submitted on 7 Aug 2010.*

It is of the utmost importance that linguistic and cultural domains would be allowed to have the capacity to own an ICANN accredited registrar. *Nacho Amadoz, on behalf of puntCAT submitted on 7 Aug 2010.*

Many local communities may end up not being able to effectively distribute or even apply for a local TLD without a local partner to support them. Many smaller communities have no local registrar and non-local registrars may be unwilling to support such a "fringe" TLD, so allowing a local registry to set up its own ICANN accredited registrar will be the only way to effectively support and market the new TLD. A local community should be able to entrust the technical and operative operation of a TLD to a local registrar partner if this is supported by the local community. In some cases, the local partner may even be required to make sure local interests of the community can be safeguarded. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.*

2. Special Considerations Needed for Non-Profit Organizations..

In order to meet the needs of not-for-profit organizations that might register a new gTLD strictly to execute a public service mission and not for commercial purposes, ICANN should offer an exception that provide for a "closed" new gTLD in which second level domains are registered and closely managed by the registry. This model provides an opportunity for organizations that want to operate a new gTLD in order to create a safer, more secure and more controlled environment to conduct their mission related activities, without offering second level domain for sale to the public. *Comments of the American Red Cross, submitted by Debra Hughes on 12 Aug 2010.*

In a "closed" new gTLD environment, second-level domain names would be assigned to employees, volunteers, departments or agents of the not-for-profit organization. The new gTLD registry would not be used to offer domains to the public for registration as currently done in existing gTLD registries like .com or .org. The linchpin to the success of this model is that the registry must be able to exercise maximum control over the use of domain names, email addresses, or any other application associated with second level domains. In this model, a registry should not be required to use an ICANN-accredited registrar for registration of second-level domain names, as this requirement is contrary to the purposes of the new gTLD under this model. Also, it is likely that for many registrars, a

new gTLD where domains will not be sold to the public does not present a lucrative business enterprise and registrars might find the strict requirements related to processing registration applications cumbersome. *Comments of the American Red Cross, submitted by Debra Hughes on 12 Aug 2010.*

C. Support for a process that would allow applicants to request exceptions and have them considered on a case-by-case basis, in the event ICANN adopts a requirement of strict separation.

The BC believes that uniquely for domain names intended for internal use, the principle of registry-registrar vertical separation should be waived. The term "internal use" is used for a range of entities that were under control of the single registrant and "not for sale to the general public," including:

- divisions and product names for a single registrant (e.g. copiers.canon)
- employees of a single registrant, for use in second level domains and email addresses
- subscribers, customers, and registered users of a single registrant, subject to approval and control by the single registrant.

Statement of the Business Constituency, submitted by Steve Del Bianco on 13 Aug 2010.

It is possible that in the forthcoming expansion of domain names there will be proprietary domain names not for sale to the general public (e.g. dot *brand*). In this unique case the BC would accept that it makes no sense for a company owning its own name or trademark in the form of a domain name to be obliged to go to a third party to register its own second-level domain names. Thus an opt-out for this special case of internal use seems appropriate. *Statement of the Business Constituency, submitted by Steve Del Bianco on 13 Aug 2010.*

ICANN should continue the policy development process in order to further define the eligibility for and scope of exceptions for Single Registrant TLDs, including a single registrant distributing domain names to its customers, subscribers, and registered users. *Statement of the Business Constituency, submitted by Steve Del Bianco on 13 Aug 2010.*

Limited exceptions to vertical integration should be authorized; one reason for exceptions is that registrars may have little incentive to devote resources to new gTLDs that target a narrow registrant base. *ECLID Comments on the Initial Report, submitted by David Lesvenan on 12 Aug 2010.*

The Red Cross urges ICANN to take all necessary steps to create exceptions to the absolute prohibition on vertical integration in the New gTLD Program. The ICANN Board needs to consider that not all new gTLDs will be used to offer domains for sale to the public. The Red Cross believes these diverse models complement the future success of ICANN and the global network and should be explored now and not dismissed, deferred or characterized as too difficult to consider. *Comments of the American Red Cross, submitted by Debra Hughes on 12 Aug 2010.*

Red Cross suggests an exceptions procedure that:

1. Adds no additional cost to the applicant for requesting the exception or for being evaluated for it. The evaluation would take place at an appropriate point following the Initial Evaluation. If the request is denied, the applicant may request an Extended Evaluation at no additional cost to the applicant. If a request is denied and the applicant does not wish to request an Extended Evaluation, or if the request is denied following an Extended Evaluation, the applicant may withdraw and receive the appropriate pro-rated refund;
2. Provides a list of exemplary circumstances that describe cases for which an exception would be allowed;
3. Provides review by an external review panel responsible for reviewing applications for exception; and
4. Outlines a set of guidelines for an external review panel, including selection of panelists, with a recommendation that panelists are familiar with the unique needs of not-for-profit organizations and other types of organizations that may make legitimate arguments in favor of an exception.

Comments of the American Red Cross, submitted by Debra Hughes on 12 Aug 2010.

There is a need for an exceptions process. Defining criteria and establishing inflexible guidelines in regards to who is eligible for exceptions is a complex task which might exclude community applicants with specialized business models that are set up for that purpose. *Comments of Constantine Roussos, Applicant for .MUSIC, submitted on 12 Aug 2010.*

There should be no additional cost to new applicants for requesting exceptions or for being evaluated for it. *Comments of Constantine Roussos, Applicant for .MUSIC, submitted on 12 Aug 2010.*

EuroDNS firmly believes the VI issue should not be analyzed through one set of example (existing “major” gTLDs) or with one single type of Registrant in mind. If the community wants new gTLDs to succeed, exceptions must be the rule. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

D. Single Registrant, Single User TLDs (SRSUs) should be explored further.

With regard to SRSUs, to avoid potential “gaming” of these exceptions, the ISPCP believes that that this exception should be carefully considered and clearly enunciated, with regards to any exceptions and related definitions that may eventually emerge as WG recommendations. *ISPCP Constituency Statement, submitted by Tony Harris on 11 Aug 2010.*

The Working Group Initial Report included a preliminary draft of single registrant exception on pages 32-33 that contemplates a more restrictive definition of internal uses

than what the BC has contemplated, listing only "the registry itself, its employees, agents and subcontractors." *Statement of the Business Constituency, submitted by Steve Del Bianco on 13 Aug 2010.*

Because this model represents a large issue, it should be explored in a separate PDP process and not within the VI WG. *SRSU TLDs, submitted on behalf of Japan Network Information Center (JPNIC) by Naomasa Maruyama on 12 Aug 2010.*

The SRSU exception must be tightly defined to avoid gaming. *Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

In exceptional cases where a new gTLD is targeted at a narrow community, or the applicant is a single-registrant, single user (SRSU) or .brand, or the TLD is unable to gain support and distribution from existing registrars, a limited exception could enhance competition, guarantee distribution, and serve the public interest. *Verisign Comments, submitted by Keith Drazek on 11 August 2010.*

The SRSU justifies a separate call for proposals with a different time-line. A separate procedure is needed to verify the respective Trademark claims and to collect audited evidence of the numbers of national or regional registrations. There might well be competing claims – equally substantiated – for the same name that had been trademarked in different jurisdictions or sectors. An appropriate arbitration mechanism might be necessary. Auctions are not an appropriate option because they would bias decisions towards the larger entities which would not support a policy of promoting diversity, choice and competition. *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

E. Support for the Need for Enhanced Compliance Efforts and the Need for a Detailed Compliance plan.

The ISPCP is concerned as to the Compliance definitions and their enforcement, with regards to possible exceptions that are being discussed such as, but not limited to, SRSU TLDs, to avoid potential "gaming" of these exceptions. *ISPCP Constituency Statement, submitted by Tony Harris on 11 Aug 2010.*

The compliance plan should consist of both an audit approach (some registries are reviewed each year) and a complaints approach (third parties can raise concerns). *Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

An assumed 500 new gTLDs per year would earn ICANN an additional \$12.5 million per year, which should be sufficient to pay for strengthening its compliance program. *Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

Red Cross agrees with the Initial Report statement that "[a] firm corporate commitment to compliance combined with the establishment of a genuine "culture of compliance" across all stakeholders in the community is absolutely necessary if ICANN is to devise and operate an effective enforcement bureau." Red Cross acknowledges and

commends the preliminary work performed by the VI Working Group on this topic, including the preliminary list of possible components of compliance and enforcement program and hopes that ICANN will take all necessary steps to assist the Community to create a robust, proactive and timely compliance and enforcement program. *Comments of the American Red Cross, submitted by Debra Hughes on 12 Aug 2010.*

Key-Systems proposes the implementation of a balanced and realistic system of strong yet flexible rules and compliance controls coupled with a penalty system designed to discover and discourage any form of abuse. Contracts and policies should be crafted in a way to detect and discourage abuse, as well as to enable compliance enforcement, thereby removing any perceived need for the prohibition, instead of a introducing a blanket prohibition on VI and CO for registrars, effectively allowing unintegrated registries or registrars to conduct in the same abusive fashion the prohibition is intended to prevent. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.*

One important element to successful enforcement is the requirement to grant equal access to all ICANN accredited registrars, which in itself serves as a check and balancing factor against the potential for abuse. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.*

It would be costly and time consuming for ICANN to be monitoring such arbitrary numbers that do not really make a difference that matters. Enforcing arbitrary cap numbers or ownership interests is not money well spent or an activity that is warranted in regards to new entrants. *Comments of Constantine Roussos, Applicant for .MUSIC, submitted on 12 Aug 2010.*

If a Registry or a Registrar misbehaves and puts Registrants or the overall stability of the DNS at risk, they should be held liable as stated by the relevant contractual provisions to be enforced by ICANN's Compliance staff. It does not make much sense to forbid an entire stakeholder group from participating in the next evolution of this industry on the off-chance that some – unidentified as of yet – harm may result from one bad actor acting improperly. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

VI. MAJOR PROPOSALS DEBATED WITHIN THE VI WORKING GROUP

As to the “*Major Proposals Debated within the VI Working Group*”, the ISPCP is supportive of preserving a level playing field for all, and avoiding the possibility of distortion in the domain marketplace, which currently operates in a highly competitive and functional mode. *ISPCP Constituency Statement, submitted by Tony Harris on 11 Aug 2010.*

While none of the proposals has consensus support, it is important to note (as reflected in polling) that proposals that would prohibit or restrict vertical integration (e.g. JN2 and RACK+ proposals) have broader combined support than proposals that would permit unrestricted vertical integration. For example, there is strong support for continuing

15% ownership caps and imposing a restriction on a vertically integrated registry and registrar from selling in its own TLD, while there is less support for allowing 100% cross ownership and unrestricted vertical integration. It should also be noted that the proposals calling for restrictions had the broadest support across the various interests in the VI Working Group. *Statement of the Registries Stakeholder Group, submitted by David Maher on 11 Aug 2010.*

Polls showing support for atoms or molecules without further context are at best incomplete or, at worst, misleading. As the VI Working Group moves toward a final report to the Council (and ultimately the Board), it should refrain from presenting molecules or atoms in a manner that creates a false impression of consensus where it does not exist. *Statement of the Registries Stakeholder Group, submitted by David Maher on 11 Aug 2010.*

The Business Constituency opposes any change to the status quo for all TLDs intended for sale to third parties (i.e. those unconnected with the Registry). "Status quo" refers to registry contracts for .com, .net, and in the 2001 and 2004 new gTLD rounds, which prohibited a registry from acquiring or controlling more than 15% of a registrar. The BC position is to oppose changes to any separation safeguards, and to maintain the 15% limit on cross-ownership interest between registrars and registries. *Statement of the Business Constituency, submitted by Steve Del Bianco on 13 Aug 2010.*

Key-Systems supports all proposals that maximize consumer benefits while minimizing potential harms from any entity, be it vertically integrated, cross-owned or fully separated. Key- Systems strongly urges against discriminating any entity by preventing them from participating in the first round of applications based solely on levels of ownership in other entities. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.*

At this stage, in view of the short delays and lack of documented facts and experience, all changes in current policy for the purposes of the next round of gTLD applications should be: (a) temporary within time lines and thresholds, (b) reversible and, (c) when confirmed, retroactive. *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

With this information Demand Media believes the ICANN Board will see that allowing some form of VI or CO in the first round of TLDs, whether a numerical limit (allowing VI up to 250,000 domains) or 100% cross-ownership without self-distribution (JN2 Proposal), will benefit consumers, encourage growth and allow for new entrants in this marketplace. All stated goals of ICANN and the new gTLD process. *Demand Media Comments, submitted by Jeff Eckhaus on 12 Aug 2010.*

A. JN2

This proposal is a reasonable starting point for the first round of new gTLDs. It has the benefit (versus CAM3, for example) of permitting exceptions to be updated over time.

Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.

An appropriate enhancement to this proposal would be an appeals process utilizing competition authorities. *Response to the Initial Report on Vertical Integration between Registrars and Registries, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

JN2 offers stability for existing contracted parties meeting the co-ownership limitation at the expense of contracted parties that planned on co-ownerships in excess of that limit. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

While not perfect, this proposal is still the one EuroDNS stands behind as it allows for 100% cross ownership providing the Registrar elects not to distribute the TLD for which it acts as a Registry. The fact that this proposal is backed by several Registrars but also by Neustar and Verisign is also quite significant. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

The JN2 Proposal goes against the very nature of Internet ecommerce and business practices that rewards new entrants for expanding the value proposition pie and success. The 15% cross-ownership interest or placing a cap on number of registrations are both unsubstantiated measures that are designed to punish success. New gTLD entrants will not have any chance of becoming the size of Verisign, Afiliis or Godaddy. *Comments of Constantine Roussos, Applicant for .MUSIC, submitted on 12 Aug 2010.*

B. Free Trade

Such a major change is not warranted at the same time that many new gTLDs, with various new business models, are being added. Given that the current registry/registrar separation model seems to be working well, major changes should only be considered after an analysis of the new market in 2012. *Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

This proposal offers opportunity to all contracted parties, subject to one or the other of the control mechanisms. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

It is no surprise that the Free Trade Model received the most support with 17 votes (not 16 which is incorrectly stated in the report), with over 35% more votes than the second most popular proposal. Free Trade is consistent with the economic times of today because the marketplace will always be the sole determinant of success. *Comments of Constantine Roussos, Applicant for .MUSIC, submitted on 12 Aug 2010.*

Free Trade should be reserved for only new entrants. There are obvious risks allowing companies such as Verisign to vertically integrate because monopoly power can be abused. *Comments of Constantine Roussos, Applicant for .MUSIC, submitted on 12 Aug 2010.*

Free Trade would impose a disproportionate burden on ICANN's other regulatory instruments (auditing, compliance, etc.) and is rather optimistic as to the resulting behavior of the Registration businesses (they are not "Authorities") in the public interest. *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

While EuroDNS and others have long advocated 100% cross-ownership without restriction, we are afraid the so-called "Free Trade" proposal goes a step too far by doing away with the essential "equal Registrar access" requirement. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

C. RACK+

This proposal appears to be the closest to the status quo, with a 15% cross-ownership provision. It is a reasonable starting point for the first round of new gTLDs. *Response to the Initial Report on Vertical Integration between Registrars and Registries, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

RACK+ offers stability for existing contracted parties meeting the co-ownership limitation at the expense of contracted parties that planned on co-ownerships in excess of that limit. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

RACK+ needs to address the question of scale economies for startups and the issue of "orphans." *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

While proponents of this solution should be commended for their consistency, EuroDNS does not believe the status quo to be an adequate solution to face the challenges that lie ahead. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

D. CAM3

A potential problem with the exemption procedure included in this proposal is that the authorities on national competition might not adequately understand the issues regarding globally operated TLDs. Hence, for this option to be viable, more publicly available economic analyses of the new market would have to be available to these authorities. *Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

The CAMv3 proposal allowing complete co-ownership, predicated on an involvement by national competition authorities is without precedent in ICANN's history. It offers opportunity to all contracted parties, subject to one or the other of the control mechanisms, intervention by ICANN upon detected harm or intervention by a national competition authority upon detected competition policy concern. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

There is not uniform international coverage of competition authorities with the

appropriate powers and competences. Even the competition authorities in the EU and the US have little experience or precedent in this field precisely because ICANN has been doing that job. The delays demanded for responses from the public authorities concerned are not very realistic: it is not so much that a competition authority needs a lot of time to treat a specific case, it is rather that those authorities have to prioritize their cases in terms of the scale of abuse and the availability of alternative recourse. (e.g. ICANN). *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

Using Competition Authorities is not practical as they may not be informed enough and the whole process would be extremely time consuming. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

E. DAGv4 and the Board Nairobi Resolution on Vertical Integration

1. The Nairobi Resolution is acceptable, with appropriate exception for a .brand TLD.

The IPC generally supports the strict separation approach approved by the ICANN Board, however, appropriate exceptions to this approach should be recognized for <.brand> registries. *Statement of the Intellectual Property Constituency, submitted by J. Scott Evans on 12 August 2010.*

The Nairobi Board Resolution is unacceptable.

The Nairobi Board resolution on issue of vertical integration is untenable -- “there will be strict separation of entities offering registry services and those acting as registrars. No co-ownership will be allowed.” While the Initial Report describes various proposed solutions for restrictions on vertical integration between registrars and registries for adoption in the New gTLD Program, we urge the Board and ICANN Staff to recognize that the default position of no cross-ownership is unacceptable to many stakeholders in the ICANN Community. *Comments of the American Red Cross, submitted by Debra Hughes on 12 Aug 2010.*

The current restrictions on registrars in DAGv4 place unprecedented and unnecessary barriers on competition and the ability of registrars to compete against incumbent registry service providers and registries, especially if such restrictions should be lifted at a later date. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.*

EuroDNS believes this strict interpretation is not necessary and may ultimately be detrimental to the whole new gTLD process. EuroDNS truly hopes that the community will give its members time to work harder still towards a solution as it is (at least) clear that the DAGv4 vision is not shared by most. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

As an applicant, there is no substantive difference between the Board's Nairobi zero co-ownership language, the DAGv4's 2% language, the 15% language of two of the VI WG positions, and the 100% language of another two of the VI WG positions. These affect the contracted parties, not applicants. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

2. In the absence of openness, the Nairobi Resolution/DAG-v4 may be an acceptable alternative.

Minds + Machines believes that the CO/VI issue must be resolved in favor of greater openness. However, if the Board finds that the midnight fears and shudders of powerful people dictate that it cannot lead but only follow, then Minds + Machines recommends that the Board keep the very strict separation proposed in Nairobi, then modified in DAG4. The DAG4/Nairobi strict separation model has several advantages: it is easy to understand, based on clear principles, and it would show the Board to have been serious in Nairobi when it said that this was the way it would go if the community could not agree on a different way. Furthermore, it is a position that can be changed in any direction, so that as the landscape becomes clearer, the Board can move judiciously and seriously in the right direction quite easily. *Comments of Minds + Machines, submitted by Antony Van Couvering on 13 Aug 2010.*

F. IPC

The concept of Single Registrant, Single User TLDs is acceptable in principle. However, the exceptions within this proposal to prevent gaming need careful review. *Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

An improvement to this proposal would be the inclusion of needed protection mechanisms; for example, as of now, this proposal allows registrants to license names to third parties that have pre-existing relationships with the brand owners in too broad a fashion and without defining "pre-existing relationship." *Response to the Initial Report, submitted on behalf of Melbourne IT by Ashe-lee Jegathesan on 12 Aug 2010.*

The IPC proposal is offered without reference to the standard and community-based types of applications, and is a distinct and covert attempt to develop a new type of application, in which co-ownership figures only incidentally as an implementation detail. It offers opportunity only to trademark holders, and is at odds with RFC1591's conception of public purpose. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

The IPC proposal would in practice expand "intellectual property rights beyond that granted by the national governments ..." *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

G. Additional Proposals Suggested for the VI Working Group's Consideration

VeriSign recognizes that the ICANN Board, absent a consensus recommendation from the VI-WG, will likely draw its own conclusions and make its own decisions regarding the market structure for the first round of new TLDs. VeriSign believes its recommendation to the VI-WG represents a compromise position that will welcome new entrants, increase competition, benefit consumers, and maximize the likelihood for success of small or underserved TLDs, while also minimizing potential consumer harms from a vertically integrated or cross-owned entity. For the first round of new TLDs, VeriSign supports the following:

- 100% cross-ownership allowed without self-distribution;
- Self distribution allowed with de minimus (10% to 15%) cross-ownership;
- Contractual language that restricts "control" beyond de minimus ownership percentages;
- Contracts and enforcement primarily focused on structural separation, ownership restrictions, and restrictions on sharing of sensitive registry data;
- Clearly defined exceptions process for SRSU and orphaned TLDs (all with numerical registration caps);
- Independent, 3rd-party audits (funded by ICANN) for cross-owned exceptions above the de minimus percentage;
- Restrictions on ownership, self-distribution, data-sharing, and control should also apply to Registry Service Providers (RSPs);
- Short-term results of the VI-WG should apply to the first round of new TLDs, but its work should continue for later rounds.

Verisign Comments, submitted by Keith Drazek on 11 August 2010.

Together with INDOM, EuroDNS and Blacknight, three European ICANN accredited registrars with extensive experience in ccTLDs, Key-Systems originally proposed a more open approach, known as the Open Registrar Proposal, which was regrettably not included in the last poll and therefore excluded from the initial report despite the wish to do otherwise. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions. Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.* The Open Registrar Proposal is described in **Annex B** of this Summary.

VII. OBSERVATIONS ON THE DOMAIN NAME MARKET AND COMPETITION.

The BC believes that removing the existing vertical separation safeguards between registries and registrars may increase the likelihood of the exercise of dominance within the domain name marketplace. The BC believes that the proponents of change have not satisfactorily demonstrated the likelihood of market place benefits to users. *Statement of the Business Constituency, submitted by Steve Del Bianco on 13 Aug 2010.*

Experience with ccTLDs show that vertical integration of registries and registrar functions can work and does not necessarily harm registrants. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.*

Many European Registries have implemented some form of Vertical Integration¹ without noticeable harm to the Registrars' market share or the Registrants' rights. Many *potential* "harms" have been discussed by the VI Working Group for future, yet such harms have never happened in the many ccTLDs space which currently use VI principles in their respective business models. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

For years companies and individuals have relied on the expertise and accessibility of their Registrar(s) to deal with the complexity of the DNS, to use and benefit from the Internet without having to deal with its more technical aspects. Now that ICANN is "pushing the Internet to next level", it seems counterproductive – and borderline absurd – to ask of a Registrar to flatly refuse to help its existing or potential customers. Many projects will simply not happen if their promoters are left on their own, without the relevant expertise. *Comments of EuroDNS, submitted by J.C. Vignes on 13 Aug 2010.*

The Board should look at the full spectrum of evidence available to it by not restricting itself to the very limited fact set provided by the experience of gTLDs, but look also to ccTLDs, where a wide variety of business models have been tried -- many of them on a global basis. *Comments of Minds + Machines, submitted by Antony Van Covering on 13 Aug 2010.*

There is no material interest in the policy question of whether parties-as-registrars to contracts with ICANN or parties-as-registries to contracts with ICANN may merge their structures, with or without functional separation, and with or without the issue of market power informing the policy drafters. *Comments of dotNAI Project submitted by Eric Brunner-Williams on 12 August 2010.*

The CO/VI issue must be resolved in favor of greater openness. This is the general trend in successful economies and societies, and eventually we will get to a place where anyone can compete with anyone absent some showing of abuse of market power. It makes sense that ICANN should be in front of that curve, rather than behind it. *Comments of Minds + Machines, submitted by Antony Van Covering on 13 Aug 2010.*

In the mid 1990's when ICANN was initially set up, it became clear that the competition authorities in the US and the EU expected ICANN to fulfil that role. As a result, most of the international experience and expertise in this area now resides in the ICANN community. One should not now expect the official competition authorities to take up parts of that responsibility, nor for ICANN to delegate other parts of the responsibility to – yet to be created – external entities. *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

Competition in the Registry market is intrinsically weak. ICANN should continue improving the conditions of competition. To-date this has been undertaken through structural separation and price caps. There may well be other ways of improving the conditions of competition but most of the alternative proposals set out in the Initial Report would move the DNS market in the other direction. *Comments of Christopher Wilkinson submitted on 13 Aug 2010.*

1. Need to Preserve Equal Access Among Registrars

Many ccTLD registries that operate their own registrar service such as DENIC, NIC.AT and others show many added benefits for registrants of vertical integration, as long as equal (or even favorable) access to non-integrated registrars is provided for. *Comments of Key-Systems, submitted by Volker Greimann on 12 August 2010; Supported by Michele Neylon of Blacknight Solutions.*

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS ON THE INITIAL REPORT.

Further work is needed on one of the fundamental terms in the report: "registrar." To illustrate, a client is the holder of an ICANN registrar accreditation that it uses to manage a set of mission critical domain names registered to a sister company. It does not sell domain names to the public, and it has no intention of ever using its registrar accreditation to sell domain names to the public. This registrar would not be a registrar for any TLD for which it was selected as the registry operator. For all practical purposes, this entity is simply a domain name registrant that uses an ICANN registrar accreditation as a management tool for its own domain names. In spite of the fact that it holds an ICANN registrar accreditation, it is not a "registrar" as that term is commonly used in the Initial Report. The Initial Report's lack of differentiation among the various types of entities holding ICANN registrar accreditations poses the risk that the client could be barred from the registry services market for no compelling policy reason. *Comments of Brett Fausett, Adorno, Yoss, Alvarado & Smith on 13 Aug 2010.*

IX. NEXT STEPS FOR VERTICAL INTEGRATION

To avoid further delays in the launch of the New gTLD Program, perhaps some of these issues could be addressed and resolved in time for the Second Round of applications, such as the Compliance and Enforcement Issues. *ISPCP Constituency Statement, submitted by Tony Harris on 11 Aug 2010.*

The RySG encourages the VI Working Group to continue its efforts to reach a compromise and consensus recommendation for future rounds of new TLDs, even if full consensus is unlikely. *Statement of the Registries Stakeholder Group, submitted by David Maher on 11 Aug 2010.*

A. Revised Report should include List of Harms.

The VI-Working Group is encouraged to incorporate a comprehensive list of potential harms from vertical integration and/or cross-ownership. The list should include

the range of potential consumer harms that might result from both allowing and prohibiting vertical integration and/or cross-ownership. *Statement of the Registries Stakeholder Group, submitted by David Maher on 11 Aug 2010.*

VeriSign encourages the VI-WG to continue its work and, in time for the next version of the Initial Report (to be submitted prior to the next GNSO Council meeting on August 26, 2010) incorporate a comprehensive list of potential harms from vertical integration and/or cross-ownership. To be most helpful to the GNSO Council and the ICANN Board, the list should include the range of potential consumer harms that might result from both allowing and prohibiting vertical integration and/or cross-ownership. *Verisign Comments, submitted by Keith Drazek on 11 August 2010.*

The Initial Report does not include an explanation of what the problems resulting from vertical integration might be. These problems must better explained and further studied for two reasons. First, it would help the GNSO and ICANN Board make an informed decision regarding a VI policy. Second, it would help reconcile the inconsistent backing received by some of the Report's proposals. *Demand Media Comments on the Initial Report on Vertical Integration between Registrars and Registries, submitted by Jeff Eckhaus on 12 Aug 2010.*

B. Concerns about Including a List of Harms in the Revised Report.

The VI Working Group as a whole seems entirely comfortable with proceeding on a non-empirical basis. Potential harms and fears are thrown out without reference to their likelihood, their likely effect, or their monetary or social impact. In this environment, anyone's concern is as good as anyone else's, because it is belief-based. The little outside knowledge that has been brought to the table (e.g., advice of competition experts) has been rejected or belittled when it doesn't suit the commercial objectives of one camp or another. *Comments of Minds + Machines, submitted by Antony Van Covering on 13 Aug 2010.*

ANNEX A
STAKEHOLDER GROUP/CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

IPC COMMENTS FOR ICANN

on

Initial Report on Vertical Integration Between Registrars and Registries

The Intellectual Property Constituency (“IPC”) is a constituency of the GNSO and represents the full range of trademark and other intellectual property interests relating to the DNS. IPC members are international, regional and national intellectual property organizations from around the world, corporate entities with intellectual property interests (often as owners of intellectual property), and individuals with an interest in intellectual property matters. The IPC appreciates this opportunity to provide its comments on the Initial Report on Vertical Integration Between Registrars and Registries posted for comment on 23 July 2010.

The issue of vertical integration is of deep importance to the IPC and its membership. The IPC generally supports the strict separation approach approved by the ICANN Board on March 12, however, appropriate exceptions to this approach should be recognized for <.brand> registries, i.e.a single registrant registry. The IPC also believes there may be other single registrant registries that would be unduly restricted by current ban on vertical integration and/or cross-ownership between Registries and Registrars. The IPC hopes to be able to collaborate with other constituencies and stakeholder groups to come up with a framework for a workable exception to the prohibition to vertical integration that can be presented to the VI working group for inclusion in its final report.

The IPC would also like to take the opportunity to extend its thanks and appreciation to the members of working group for their efforts on this issues.

COMMENTS FROM ISPCP CONSTITUENCY

The ISPCP has followed the work of the Vertical Integration group attentively, and would like to submit the following brief comments.

We note that the report states that there is general acceptance within the WG, for the *“Key Principles Developed by the VI Working Group”*. Whereas the issues these principles address are unquestionably important, they nonetheless raise some concerns within the ISPCP. Our Constituency is concerned as to the Compliance definitions and their enforcement, with regards to possible exceptions that are being discussed such as, but not limited to, SRSU (single registrant, single user) TLDs, to avoid potential “gaming” of these exceptions. We feel that this should be carefully considered and clearly enunciated, with regards to any exceptions that may eventually emerge as WG recommendations.

As to the *“Major Proposals Debated within the VI Working Group”*, the ISPCP is supportive of preserving a level playing field for all, and avoiding the possibility of distortion in the domain marketplace, which currently operates in a highly competitive and functional mode. As service providers to all Internet users, ISPs and Connectivity Providers need the domain name marketplace to operate transparently and smoothly, ensuring Internet users have fair and equitable access for their registration needs, within an environment where competition guarantees low prices and affordability.

With regards to *“Compliance and Enforcement”*, and in reference to the challenges related to effective Compliance and Enforcement, we note the following statement included therein: *“Writing rules, creating the necessary plans, obtaining the necessary resources, hiring qualified employees, training, establishing operational systems, and having an effective program at the time new TLDs launch, is not a trivial task”*. Our constituency is concerned that introducing new issues that require suitable Compliance and Enforcement to be made available by ICANN, could result in further delays to the New gTLD application timeline. Given the two year delay that

has already occurred in order to address the “overarching issues” that emerged, it would not seem appropriate to follow a course that might result in additional delays and postponements. Perhaps some of these issues could be addressed and resolved in time for the Second Round of applications.

Registrar Stakeholder Group Comments - Vertical Integration Initial Report

- *To:* "vi-pdp-initial-report@xxxxxxxx" <vi-pdp-initial-report@xxxxxxxx>
- *Subject:* Registrar Stakeholder Group Comments - Vertical Integration Initial Report
- *From:* "Clarke D. Walton" <clarke.walton@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
- *Date:* Fri, 13 Aug 2010 07:15:29 -0400

BACKGROUND

The Registrar Stakeholder Group ("RrSG") is providing comments regarding the Initial Report on Vertical Integration Between Registrars and Registries ("VI Initial Report"). This position paper captures the overall sentiment expressed by the RrSG members who provided feedback about this matter. Due to time constraints, however, no formal vote regarding this position paper was taken.

RrSG POSITION

The RrSG appreciates the effort of the Vertical Integration Working Group ("VI WG") and respects the VI WG's commitment to evaluating the proposed solutions regarding vertical integration between registrars and registries for New TLDs.

The RrSG recognizes the importance of resolving the vertical integration question in a manner that not only considers the interests of ICANN stakeholders but also balances those interests with the interests of consumers and the public. Members from the RrSG, however, have participated in the debate regarding registrar-registry separation for New TLDs for more than two years. This extended period of time negatively impacts consumer and public interests as the introduction of New TLDs is continually and indeterminately delayed.

ICANN should move forward by evaluating the VI WG's proposed solutions and the related community comments then ICANN should quickly, positively and firmly decide on a resolution to the question of vertical integration between registrars and registries, as such would inure to the benefit of consumers and the public interest.

CONCLUSION

The opinions expressed by the RrSG in this position paper should not be interpreted to reflect the individual opinion of any particular RrSG member.

GNSO gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group Statement

Issue: Initial Report on Vertical Integration Between Registrars and Registries

Date: 12 August 2010

Issue Document URL: [Initial Report](#)

This statement on the issue noted above is submitted on behalf of the gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG). The statement that follows represents a consensus position of the RySG as further detailed at the end of the document. The RySG statement was arrived at through a combination of RySG email list discussion and RySG meetings (including teleconference meetings).

The RySG submits these comments in response to the Interim Report of the Vertical Integration PDP Working Group (VIWG). The RySG recognizes the significant work that has taken place in the VIWG by a significant number of participants (over 60) from across the ICANN community. The RySG also notes the compressed timetable under which the VIWG has to work to produce a report to the Board (through the Council).

The RySG wishes to underscore the following points for the VIWG to consider:

- The Interim Report reflects no consensus for any of the proposals. The RySG recognizes that the lack of consensus is in part a byproduct of the compressed schedule and the resulting time and resource constraints otherwise needed to address the complex issues surrounding vertical integration and a strong divergence of views among the participants in the VIWG. The RySG also recognizes that, due to the significant and entrenched differences among the large number of participants, full consensus may never be realized. The RySG encourages the VIWG to continue its efforts to reach a

compromise and consensus recommendation for future rounds of new TLDs, even if full consensus is unlikely.

Proposals were put forward by a number of participants in the VIWG. While none of the proposals has consensus support on its own, it is important to note (as reflected in polling) that proposals that would prohibit or restrict vertical integration (e.g. JN2 and RACK+ proposals) have broader combined support than proposals that would permit unrestricted vertical integration. For example, there is strong support for continuing 15% ownership caps and imposing a restriction on a vertically integrated registry and registrar from selling in its own TLD, while there is less support for allowing 100% cross ownership and unrestricted vertical integration. It should also be noted that the proposals calling for restrictions had the broadest support across the various interests in the VIWG. To the extent that polls are given weight, the interests participating in the respective polls should be taken into account when determining the level and nature of support.

- A number of polls were also taken with regard to “molecules” and “atoms.” The effort to develop molecules and atoms was an attempt by the co-Chairs to find at least partial consensus among the VIWG. A number of VIWG members noted concern with the inclusion of molecules and atoms in the Interim Report and the inclusion of polls taken with respect to molecules and atoms. Atoms were singular elements taken from the various proposals. The fundamental flaw with putting any stock in molecules or atoms is that a VIWG member could support an atom in isolation and could indicate that support in response to a poll. However, should that atom be combined with another atom from a different proposal that VIWG member might negate his or her earlier support for the first atom. As such, polls showing support for atoms or molecules without further context are at best incomplete or, at worst, misleading.
- As the VIWG moves toward a final report to the Council (and ultimately the Board), it should refrain from presenting molecules or atoms in a manner that creates a false impression of consensus where it does not exist. Importantly, the inclusion of molecules or atoms in this manner risks presenting the Council and the Board with an “a la carte menu” of elements of vertical integration policy that do not have the same qualitative support as the proposals that were discussed in far greater detail and where poll results

were based on comprehensive proposals and not a subset of fractured elements.

- The RySG encourages the VI-WG to continue its work and, in time for the next version of the Initial Report (to be submitted prior to the next GNSO Council meeting on August 26, 2010) incorporate a comprehensive list of potential harms from vertical integration and/or cross-ownership. To be most helpful to the GNSO Council and the ICANN Board, the list should include the range of potential consumer harms that might result from both allowing and prohibiting vertical integration and/or cross-ownership.

RySG Level of Support

1. Level of Support of Active Members: Majority

1.1. # of Members in Favor: 8

1.2. # of Members Opposed: 0

1.3. # of Members that Abstained: 0

1.4. # of Members that did not vote: 5

2. Minority Position(s): N/A

General RySG Information

- Total # of eligible RySG Members²⁶: 14
- Total # of RySG Members: 13
- Total # of Active RySG Members²⁷: 13
- Minimum requirement for supermajority of Active Members: 9

²⁶ All top-level domain sponsors or registry operators that have agreements with ICANN to provide Registry Services in support of one or more gTLDs are eligible for membership upon the “effective date” set forth in the operator’s or sponsor’s agreement (RySG Articles of Operation, Article III, Membership, ¶ 1). The RySG Articles of Operation can be found at <<http://gnso.icann.org/files/gnso/en/improvements/registries-sg-proposed-charter-30jul09-en.pdf>>. The Universal Postal Union recently concluded the .POST agreement with ICANN, but as of this writing the UPU has not applied for RySG membership.

²⁷ Per the RySG Articles of Operation, Article III, Membership, ¶ 6: Members shall be classified as “Active” or “Inactive”. A member shall be classified as “Active” unless it is classified as “Inactive” pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph. Members become Inactive by failing to participate in a RySG meeting or voting process for a total of three consecutive meetings or voting processes or both. An Inactive member shall have all rights and duties of membership other than being counted as present or absent in the determination of a quorum. An Inactive member may resume Active status at any time by participating in a RySG meeting or by voting.

- Minimum requirement for majority of Active Members: 7
- # of Members that participated in this process: 13
- Names of Members that participated in this process: 13
 1. Afiliias (.info & .mobi)
 2. DotAsia Organisation (.asia)
 3. DotCooperation (.coop)
 4. Employ Media (.jobs)
 5. Fundació puntCAT (.cat)
 6. Museum Domain Management Association – MuseDoma (.museum)
 7. NeuStar (.biz)
 8. Public Interest Registry - PIR (.org)
 9. RegistryPro (.pro)
 10. Societe Internationale de Telecommunication Aeronautiques – SITA (.aero)
 11. Telnic (.tel)
 12. Tralliance Registry Management Company (TRMC) (.travel)
 13. VeriSign (.com, .name, & .net)
- Names & email addresses for points of contact
 - Chair: David Maher, dmaher@pir.org
 - Vice Chair: Jeff Neuman, Jeff.Neuman@Neustar.us
 - Secretariat: Cherie Stubbs, Cherstubbs@aol.com
 - RySG representative for this statement: Brian Cute, briancute@AFILIAS.INFO

BC Comment on Vertical Integration Working Group Initial Report

August 2010

Executive Summary of Commercial and Business User Constituency (BC) comments on Vertical Integration Working Group Initial Report

This submission is in response to ICANN's call for public comments on the Vertical Integration (VI) Working Group Initial Report. The BC has closely followed the Working Group's discussions and considers VI a priority topic. Several BC members are actively engaged in the VI Working Group (in their individual capacity, not as official representatives of the BC).

The BC developed and posted a position on VI in September 2009 (see Annex A). In this comment filing, the BC restates its September 2009 position and provides two clarifications to ensure that our position is relevant to the VI Working Group's initial report. All other elements of the September 2009 position remain, and the BC asks the WG to take note of these clarifications to the BC position.

First, the BC restates "**The BC thus opposes any change to the status quo for all TLDs intended for sale to third parties (i.e. those unconnected with the Registry).**" Below, we define the meaning of "status quo" at the time the BC took this position and in the context of bi-directional separation.

Second, the BC restates "**The BC believes that uniquely for domain names intended for internal use, the principle of registry-registrar vertical separation should be waived.**" Below, we define the meaning of "internal use" as used in our position.

Finally, the BC request that ICANN continue the policy development process in order to further define the eligibility for and scope of exceptions for Single Registrant TLDs, including a single registrant distributing domain names to its customers, subscribers, and registered users.

The BC expects that its position will evolve as the Working Group continues its policy development efforts.

BC Recommendation 1:

The full BC position from September 2009 is included in Annex A. The first recommendation from the September 2009 position is:

The BC believes that removing the existing vertical separation safeguards between registries and registrars may increase the likelihood of the exercise of dominance within the domain name marketplace.

The BC believes that the proponents of change have not satisfactorily demonstrated the likelihood of market place benefits to users.

The BC believes that the proposed 100,000 waiver is likely to effectively remove the principle of separation in that it will apply to the most market-significant names.

The BC thus opposes any change to the status quo for all TLDs intended for sale to third parties (i.e. those unconnected with the Registry).

Clarification: In the BC September 2009 position, "status quo" referred to registry contracts for .com, .net, and in the 2001 and 2004 new gTLD rounds, which prohibited a registry from acquiring or controlling more than 15% of a registrar.

In addition, the BC September 2009 position included specific references to "vertical separation safeguards", such as prohibiting registrars from selling names in registries where they had a controlling interest.

The BC is concerned about potential abuses of cross ownership, including access to registrant information that could be used for cross marketing or other purposes for which the data was not collected. Maintaining separation of registrar and registry functions and ownership is viewed by BC as one important 'structural safeguard'.

While the BC position was silent about registrar ownership of registries, the intent of the BC position was to oppose changes in existing structural separation safeguards. Therefore, the BC position is to oppose changes to any separation safeguards, and to maintain the 15% limit on cross-ownership interest between registrars and registries.

Clarification of BC position on BC Recommendation 2:

The second recommendation from the BC September 2009 position supports a narrow exception for registries operated by a single registrant that is distributing second level names for internal use:

BC position (closed markets)

It is possible that in the forthcoming expansion of domain names there will be proprietary domain names not for sale to the general public (e.g. dot *brand*). In this unique case the BC would accept that it makes no sense for a company owning its own name or trademark in the form of a domain name to be obliged to go to a third party to register its own second-level domain names. Thus an opt-out for this special case of internal use seems appropriate.

Recommendation 2:

The BC believes that uniquely for domain names intended for internal use, the principle of registry-registrar vertical separation should be waived.

When the BC developed its September 2009 position, "internal use" was a term used for a range of entities that were under control of the single registrant and "not for sale to the general public". At the time, BC discussions of "internal use" included the following entities:

- o divisions and product names for a single registrant (e.g. copiers.canon)
- o employees of a single registrant, for use in second level domains and email addresses
- o subscribers, customers, and registered users of a single registrant, subject to approval and control by the single registrant.

The range of internal uses discussed by the BC should be considered by the Working Group as it develops consensus principles for single registrant exceptions its final report. The BC will continue its internal discussions on these categories.

BC Request for continued policy development of single registrant exception within the Working Group

Finally, the BC requests that ICANN continue the policy development process in order to define the eligibility criteria and conditions for the Single Registrant exception as part of the current round of new gTLDs.

The Working Group Initial Report included a preliminary draft of single registrant exception on pages 32-33 that contemplates a more restrictive definition of internal uses than what the

BC has contemplated, listing only "the registry itself, its employees, agents and subcontractors."

The BC requests further exploration of the range of internal entities for which a single registrant may distribute and manage domains within its TLD. As noted above, the BC is interested in flexibility to allow a qualified single registrant to distribute and manage domains for its departments, employees, customers, subscribers, and registered users. However, the BC understands that there would need to be well-defined criteria and enforceable contractual terms.

On all issues regarding vertical integration, the BC expects that its position will evolve as the Working Group continues its policy development work.

Submitted by the BC Executive Committee, 12-Aug-2010

Annex A

BC Position on Registry-Registrar vertical separation

September 2009

Background

The principle of the vertical separation of Registry and Registrar was established 11 years ago as a pro-competitive action at the time of the monopoly of one entity (Network Solutions now VeriSign) owning the registry and acting as registrar for .com .org and .net. ICANN created the system we have today, where registrants place orders with ICANN-accredited registrars, who in turn place the orders with ICANN-contracted TLD registries.

In essence there were three pro-competitive benefits:

- a) the splitting of a dominant market player thus avoiding the potential for the exercise of dominance;
- b) the subsequent development of a competitive market with multiple registrars offering consumers a variety of services connected with the purchase of domain names;
- c) the subsequent development of competition at the registry level as ICANN moved to open up the registry market. The

BC supported this principle.

To ensure this structure held, ICANN restricted registries from acquiring a substantial percentage of any registrar, so VeriSign (the .com and .net registry) cannot buy a controlling interest in registrar GoDaddy, for example.

Judged by price alone (as an indicator of a competitive market) the pro-competitive benefits have proved to be real. Today the price of a .com domain name has dropped and there are

multiple registrars competing for business with varied offerings.

Developments

In the subsequent 11 years, the BC has continued to support a cautious expansion of gTLD registries (in pursuit of the competitive benefits) and the continuation of Registry Registrar separation. Some of the largest registrars have become registry operators which also register those TLD names to the public. For example GoDaddy provides the registry for country-code .me (so Montenegro makes the rules, not ICANN). Also certain registries have been affiliated with domain registration companies for some time e.g. HostWay and .PRO, Poptel and .COOP, CORE and .CAT, Verisign and DBMS, GoDaddy and .ME, Afiliis and .INFO.

Some registrars, such as eNom, are pressing ICANN to eliminate the restrictions on Registry-Registrar cross-ownership, so that those registrars can compete as registry businesses, sell new gTLD domains directly to the public, and sell them to all other ICANN accredited registrars as well. Other registrars, such as Network Solutions, has called for a continuation of the structural separation requirements between registries and registrars, but some liberalization in the cross-ownership requirements.

ICANN has reacted positively to the proposals to change in a limited fashion by proposing a continuation of the principle of separation BUT with a waiver for the first 100,000 names (described as a *limited lifting* of the requirement):

"With a limited exception, a registrar should not sell domain services of an affiliated registry. This limit is set to a certain threshold, in this model, 100,000 domain names".
<http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/registry-regr-separation-18feb09-en.pdf>

The questions are thus:

- a) 11 years on, do the pro-competitive benefits outlined above continue to exist?
- b) Does the 100,000 waiver effectively remove the principle of separation in that it will apply to the most market-significant names?

The position of the existing market players

In favour of the status quo of continued separation

Certain existing registries, such as NeuStar (.biz) and Public Interest Registry (.org) are in support of any entity becoming a registry or registry operator, so long as that entity does not distribute domain names in the same TLD that they operate as a registry. They oppose the proposal to discontinue separation on the basis that registrars have a substantial head start in marketing domain names to the public.

In favour of change and the ending of separation

Certain existing large registrars argue that only entities with market power which can be exercised for anti-competitive purposes (such as Verisign with .com and .net), should be subject to cross-ownership restrictions. These registrars claim it is in consumers' interests to allow cross-ownership because it would enhance competition and allow for the passing on of operational efficiencies in the form of lower prices.

BC Position (general market)

Given the uncertainty of the merits of the arguments either way the BC believes that the burden of proof must lie with the proponents of change. Those who favour change must demonstrate: a) that the competitive benefits outlined above no longer apply and b) that there will be new competitive benefits and no significant adverse effects as a result of such change.

The decision is of course not in the hands of registrars or registries but in the hands of the ICANN Board. The question for the Board is simple: "Will removing the vertical separation safeguards either INCREASE or DECREASE the likelihood of the exercise of dominance within the domain name marketplace?"

Recommendation 1:

The BC believes that removing the existing vertical separation safeguards between registries and registrars may increase the likelihood of the exercise of dominance within the domain name marketplace.

The BC believes that the proponents of change have not satisfactorily demonstrated the likelihood of market place benefits to users.

The BC believes that the proposed 100,000 waiver is likely to effectively remove the principle of separation in that it will apply to the most market-significant names.

The BC thus opposes any change to the status quo for all TLDs intended for sale to third parties (i.e. those unconnected with the Registry).

BC position (closed markets)

It is possible that in the forthcoming expansion of domain names there will be proprietary domain names not for sale to the general public e.g. dot *brand*. In this unique case the BC would accept that it makes no sense for a company owning its own name or trademark in the form of a domain name to be obliged to go to a third party to register its own second-level domain names. Thus an opt-out for this special case of internal use seems appropriate.

Recommendation 2:

The BC believes that uniquely for domain names intended for internal use, the principle of registry-registrar vertical separation should be waived.

ANNEX B

OTHER PROPOSALS

Open Registrar Proposal

04/26/10

Open Registrar Proposal

The core of the vertical integration debate is ensuring competition, i.e. making sure that an organization that holds a monopoly or, more correct from a competition law point of view, an "essential facility" (the TLD), ensures access to such resource under fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory terms (the "FRAND" standard);

The choice made in order to ensure such access is to disentangle two roles: the registry (managing the infrastructure) and a registrar (reseller network) providing access to the infrastructure. What's interesting is that although we are talking about "new" gTLDs, the debate is nothing new: we have seen similar issues in telecommunications, the railroad network, energy and mining, and so on;

However, the Vertical Integration Working Group ("VI WG") is still one of a kind: 62 members, 1500 emails on the mailing list and several extremely good and diverse proposals. Having attended all conference calls, read each and every e-mail and examining all documents, we (a group of mid-size European Registrars) respectfully submit the following, with several key principles.

I. A balanced and Realistic view

Years of experience in the ccTLDs space abundantly show that models with cross ownership ("CO") or vertical integration ("VI") between registries and registrars **do not cause consumer harm by themselves** and therefore should not be automatically prohibited in the new gTLD ("nTLD") process.

To the contrary, we believe (along with DM and MMA) that too strict limitations of such models will end up crippling or worse discourage many potential nTLD applications, directly against ICANN goal of stimulating innovation and growth for nTLDs.

We are sympathetic to comments – such as PIR's – which point out some danger in total and unmonitored integration. However, this "danger" as yet to be substantized with clear and quantifiable examples. Likewise, we believe that although past experiences must be taken into account when shaping this new framework, they should not be the only thing we – as a community – and ICANN – as a whole – listens to. As the name implies, nTLDs will open a new era and rules should allow for that.

Open Registrar Proposal

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A prime example of this “new era” is the strong interest that key consumer brands have shown in participating in the process. This WG is fortunate enough to count at least of one of them as its member and we all know of the interest of Canon and HP, to name a few. Since nothing in the ICANN rules prevent them from applying, we believe it is essential for this WG to allow them to pursue their goals.

As a result, we strongly believe the only suitable answer to the above is a strong yet flexible framework of rules to be implemented. It needs to be capable of effectively control CO and VI – and indeed avoid dangers but only those that are clearly identified – yet provide flexibility for innovation while guaranteeing equal access to Registrars.

Because none of us has a crystal ball, the ultimate goal must be to foster innovation. While we are not proponents of pure *laissez-faire* the truth is that the Internet is constantly evolving: our WG has no foolproof way of determining what TLD will or will be a success and it would be quite presumptuous to judge a business model before it is even created. Twitter as become a key service in less than two years and without any “specific service” attached to the .com Top Level Domain. Similarly – and closer to home – the .Tel Top Level Domain is quite successful with only a handful of Registrars promoting it effectively.

II. Fighting the issues, not the potential risks

a) Crisis? What crisis?

There may be risks in nTLDs but it seems unrealistic to want to avoid them all before they happen. To name just a few, UDRP, de-accreditation of a Registrar, whois compliance checks... All remedies that are constantly used in our industry and have one common aspect: they are always used after the fact. Likewise, should VI in specific nTLDs prove to be detrimental to customers, checks and balances are in place, or will be added to rectify it *when it happens*. Similarly, if a nTLD Registry were to violate its “equal access” provision, penalties can and should be enforced... But it is unrealistic to pretend correcting an issue before it arises: if it works, don't fix it!

b) Competition authorities are not the solution

We note certain proposals have suggested preliminary investigation of all nTLDs applications by competition authorities, but do not hold these to be practical solutions, as many such authorities will not be available for preliminary investigations or too slow

Open Registrar Proposal

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to respond when faced with a deluge of proposed applications. Since many in the ICANN community nTLD process has been delayed significantly already, we would like to avoid waiting unnecessarily for an answer that may never come or be satisfactory.

Besides, many Competition Authorities (in the US or the EU) simply do not have the authority to consider cross-border issues while in most of the cases, any clearance sought will likely fall under the *de minimis* rule, which states that competition authorities cannot consider issues where the impact on the market is less than 5% (again, this rule applies in the US as well as in the EU)

c) Audits are cost-ineffective

Likewise, we hold regular audits to be unnecessary and cost-ineffective, especially for smaller registries and therefore propose audits to be imposed only in case of legitimate complaints of non-compliance. However, we strongly think such an obligation should have more teeth than what was envisioned: an audit bringing unsatisfactory results should trigger financial consequences or even de-accreditation in severe and repeated cases.

III. Specific answers on Cross Ownership and Vertical Integration

a) No magic number

Having read the whole list and consulted with many stakeholders, we do not yet see unpreventable harm that could come from a registrar affiliated with a registry selling domains of a non-affiliated registry. The "15%" quota is a byproduct of the domain name market as it once was, way before there was millions of Domain Names in the world and, more importantly, before ICANN itself decided there should be no finite number of nTLDs available.

We therefore propose that full registry/registrar cross-ownership of 100% should be allowed and can be beneficial to the goal of stimulating innovation and growth for nTLDs. We do not believe in an arbitrary/artificial limitation of ownership as it provides no benefit in itself regarding the concerns raised regarding control. The same level of control is possible regardless if there is full ownership or just 15% ownership, depending on the setup of the owned entity. There is a high risk that such limitations only serve incumbent registry operators by preventing new competitors from entering the market.

Open Registrar Proposal

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b) Vertical Integration is not automatically evil and can be quite useful

The fact that some ccTLDs Registries do act as Registrars for their own Internet Communities should be proof enough that VI is indeed a possibility. .SE, .UK, .DE have been doing it for ages and the German and British market are among the strongest in the world.

Moreover, VI may be needed for fringe TLDs and TLDs in regions with no or few ICANN registrars. Proposals suggesting 7 registries could band together to form one registrar needlessly curtails the economic options of a new TLD registry and disregards basic market requirements.

c) The need for a reasonable and practical “Chinese wall”

While we agree that there may be possibilities for abuse from a registrar affiliated with a registry selling domains of said affiliated registry, we believe such abuse can be effectively curtailed by implementing barriers, checks and balances as well as penalties for offending entities.

We therefore propose to limit the level of control to prevent harm by inserting yet-to-be-defined layers of barriers of information (information firewalls) between the registry and registrar entities, as well as implementing contractual guarantees for other registrars to prevent discrimination. Once again, we believe preventing any and all wrongdoing before it happens is, at best, wishful thinking. Creating enforceable sanctions towards Registries and/or Registrars guilty of clearly defined wrongdoing will be much easier and practical.

This can be achieved by requiring strict financial separation of registrar and registry entities, functional separation of the entities as much as is required, and to a lesser extent, a limitation of market share or market power in the TLD. Further limitation of control will be achieved by strict adherence to so-called “Rec. 19”, by implementing guarantees to ensure equal access for all ICANN accredited registrars (see below), mandating the use of registrars (sale only through registrars), except in the case of SRSUs as detailed below.

IV. Equal Access

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In principle, all ICANN accredited registrars must be granted equal access, all registrars interested in carrying the TLD must have the same basic opportunities for registrations and management of a domain name. This includes an equal number of connections to the registry system for all registrars, first come, first serve amongst registrars for general availability/non-auction phases, adequate support levels for all registrars as well as firewalling information of registry data from registrar entity.

Cross-ownership should not prohibit a registrar to sell domains from a registry of which it holds shares, provided equal access to registrations is guaranteed and does not discriminate against other registrars.

V. Single Registrant TLDs

As a consequence of the above, single registrant TLDs will be possible and registries be in general allowed to own or act as a registrar in their own TLD.

As previously suggested in other proposals, a separation can and must be made on the requirement of equal access of registrars depending on the intended and actual use of the SR TLD.

a) SRSU

In cases where the SR is also the single user, no equal access of registrars shall be deemed necessary. Such uses would include dotBrands and organizations where the domain names would only be available for use by that organization in a very narrow sense, and responsibility for each domain name and its use remains with the single registrant. As soon as domain names are distributed, SRSU does no longer apply.

b) SRMU

However, once domain names are to be provided to multiple users, equal access rights for all registrars must once again be ensured to prevent opportunities for gaming. Many non-SR TLDs may otherwise be inclined to apply for SR status just to get around the equal access requirement. For example, a .WEB SR TLD without equal access based on a club membership structure or other creative distribution method shall not be allowed.

Open Registrar Proposal

04/26/10

To prevent gaming, strict guidelines would need to be defined to limit SRSU TLDs to such proposals without gaming potential. If no such guidelines can be defined by this WG, no exception from the equal access provision shall be made.

VI. Misc: our answers to some issues raised on list

a) Registry Service Providers (RSPs)

The Afilias and Neustar examples show quite clearly that a good RSP can be instrumental in the success of a TLD. The experience gathered for one automatically benefit the others and allow for better investment planning and outreach. Preventing RSP from having an interest in one or more TLD could therefore be counterproductive to the Community.

Thus, we propose that no cap should be implemented on cross ownership between a registry service provider (registry tech provider) and a registrar, but that similar levels of limitation of control be required. Excluding the requirement for annual audits, we see the Neustar proposal as a working model regarding RSPs.

b) Community and "Orphan" TLDs

As registries are able to set up a registrar under the proposed system, no special rules for these types of TLDs are necessary.

c) Compliance monitoring and penalties

As some market players may try to violate their obligations with regard to limits of control and/or equal access, SRSUs may turn out to be SRMUs after all, etc. For such violators, ICANN should put in place a firm and strict penalty system for the offending player, with penalties ranging from financial penalties, imposition of stronger restrictions up to the loss of the registry contract in case of severe and repeated offenses. Compliance should (and will be) monitored by competitors, registrars and registries alike, and complaints be investigated by ICANN and/or contractors of ICANN.

CONCLUSION: the need for VI-CO within reasonable boundaries

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Approaching the matter with an open mind at the very beginning of this WG's work, we have never been convinced of any potential danger of some VI or CO for the future nTLDs.

Any innovation carries an inherent level of risk: domain names brought cybersquatting and tasting, to which the community found solutions – similarly the community will find solutions *if and when* issues arise, which has simply not been the case so far.

ccTLDs have used VI/CO with great success while Registrars carrying those still continue growing their market share. It stands to reason then that a Registry offering Domain Name registrations directly is not enough to “capture” the customer who still knows and uses the choice of the market.

nTLDs allow for diversity, which means that .Nokia will not compete directly with .Biz and can be registered (and used) alongside a .Web. As a result, we don't see dotBrand TLDs as a risk for other TLDs and believe the community should understand that some companies need to gather additional control over the way their brand is used on the Internet, through SRSU if necessary. Likewise, a Japanese brand may prefer that its customers in France use their local Registrar while their key market would be “better served” by the brand company directly: it is presumptuous – at best – for this WG to try to guess each and every business model that nTLDs will use.

Privacy and data exchange has evolved tremendously over the last ten years, most of the time for the benefit of the consumer. There is no reason to believe that data is more secure in the hand of a small ICANN accredited Registrar – which may not have adequate redundancy or backup plans – than at the Registry level, as is the case in many ccTLDs.

The necessary safeguards do exist, they will evolve as the market does. In the meantime we should take all the steps necessary to allow this evolution to happen.

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