Cross-Community Working Group on Use of Country/Territory Names as TLDs
TRANSCRIPT
Wednesday, 14 January 2015 at 11:00 UTC

Note: The following is the output of transcribing from an audio recording. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases it is incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages or transcription errors. It is posted as an aid to understanding the proceedings at the meeting, but should not be treated as an authoritative record. The audio is also available at:
http://audio.icann.org/gnso/gnso-ccwg-unct-20150114-en.mp3
On page: http://gnso.icann.org/calendar/#jan

Attendees:

ccNSO
Ron Sherwood, .vi
Annebeth Lange, .no
Mirjana Tasic, .rs
Laura Hutchison, .uk
Grigori Saghyan, .am
Jordi Iparraguirre, ccNSO Council NomCom appointee
Paul Szyndler, .au (Co-Chair)
Daniel Kalchev, .bg

GNSO
Carlos Raul Guttierez, NPOC
Maxim Alzoba, NTAG

At-Large
Cheryl Langdon-Orr

ISO
Jaap Akkerhuis

Apologies:
Heather Forrest
Marika Konings

ICANN staff:
Bart Boswinkel
Lars Hoffman
Nathalie Peregrine

Nathalie Peregrine: Thank you very much, (Evie). Good morning, good afternoon, good evening everybody and welcome to the Cross Community Working Group on Use of Country and Territory Names as TLDs meeting on the 14th of January, 2015.

On the call today we have Grigori Saghyan, Carlos Gutierrez, Annebeth Lange, Mirjana Tasic, Laura Hutchison, Ron Sherwood, Cheryl Langdon-Orr, Jordi Iparraguirre, Jaap Akkerhuis, Maxim Alzoba, Paul Szyndler and Daniel Kalchev.

We have an apology from Marika Konings. And from staff we have Bart Boswinkel, Lars Hoffman and myself, Nathalie Peregrine.

I'd like to remind you all to please state your names before speaking for purposes of the transcription. Thank you ever so much and over to you, Paul.

Paul Szyndler: Thank you very much for that. And my name, for the record, is Paul Szyndler; I'm one of the co-chairs of this working group from the ccNSO side of things. I acknowledge that we have three other co-chairs, Annebeth Lange, Carlos Gutierrez and Heather Forrest. And I'm taking this call on the grounds that we're largely revising some of the activities of the study group that we have - had previous to this. We're looking over that group's work so hence it's something that I should probably lead.

We've got a couple of simple agenda items today. It is our first meeting for 2015 so I don't expect it will necessarily be a long one but I just really wanted to get everybody up to speed and working on the key issues that we have for the group for the duration of this year.

Welcome aside, we were supposed to work through a review of a summary paper that staff had sent around to everyone which was - and I hope everyone has. It was a simple one-page executive summary of work that we had done - the study group had done today and it's basically a breakdown of three areas the study group had looked at. And they're some of the issues - they're the first issues that we were going to look at.

I'm sorry - I'm not in the Adobe room at the moment, so, Lars, Bart, is that up on the collective screen at the moment?

Bart Boswinkel: Yes it is, Paul.

Paul Szyndler: Thank you very much. That's the same piece of paper I have in front of me. So basically there were three deliverables, and, again, I'm telling a little bit of a historical story here but it may be beneficial for members of the working group who were not members of the study group and that is there were three deliverables.

One was to provide an overview of the current policies and processes within ICANN for - as they relate to country and territory names. And that may be with regard to new gTLDs, IDNs, the rules regarding ccTLDs, etcetera.

The second deliverable was to provide an overview of the strings that were particularly - so looking at country and territory names and why they may be represented. And then the third deliverable was any issues that might arise if you take the policies and processes that ICANN has with regards to country and territory names and apply it to any permutation of country or territory name you might find and what would happen.

The focus of this group and the focus of this call and our immediate work for the next few months is to look at that third deliverable so are there any issues

and what are the issues that likely arise in connection with applying policies to current or proposed strings.

As a starting point I would note that - well, as it says in the presentation there - it should be reiterated that there is no authority that exists for the definition or application of country and territory names. So as it currently stands there are a variety of rules, a variety of policies when it comes to the use of country and territory names.

And the purpose of this executive summary was to lay out for everyone what was - what we were thinking in terms of the first few categories so that includes two letter strings so predominantly ccTLD code; three letter strings that might be similar to those, and then also the long and short form names of countries and territories.

When we were working through this as a study group we felt that these were the easy targets for country and territory names because they should be simple, they should be relatively well-defined, people should understand what they mean. And, yet, even when it came to these issues there was some potential for confusion.

So, as it says in the summary, two letter strings were derived from the ISO 3166-1 alpha 2 list and therefore it wasn't something that was determined by ICANN or an SO or AC; it was an established list of the ISO. And it's subject to change because, by the very nature of countries and territories, they change and there are developments with regards to the abolition of particular countries or the establishment of others. And the list is therefore flexible.

When it comes to the way the Applicant Guidebook defines two letter strings it says that applied for gTLD strings in ASCII must be composed of three or more visually distinct characters; two character ASCII strings aren't permitted because they are part of the ISO list. So that's a fairly strict and fairly simple definition of how we treat two letter representations of country names.

So, again, when we go back to the work of the study group, this was, for lack of a better term, the simplest terms, the simplest, the easiest, most definable representation of country and territory names as it relates to TLDs. However, there's always a caveat and that is that the list is not static so it could always potentially change. But of course there's always a finite list or finite definition of - a finite number of two letter codes.

So continuing on, when it comes to three letter strings they are, again, when it comes to country and territory names, defined by the same ISO list. And this is acknowledged by the Applicant Guidebook. And, again, it's alpha 3 codes as they relate to the ISO standard. But it's also dynamic because it's derived from the two letter codes.

There are some historical anomalies, as we've noted in the executive summary. DotCom is part of the alpha 3 list and should, technically, be prohibited but it's part of commerce and that was just, again, a historical anomaly going back before there were current provisions in place.

And there are other alpha 3 strings that are protected for various reasons. DotNIC is an example because it's a technically reserved term but it's also the three letter code for Nicaragua. There are various other examples of that. I've used some other examples in the past which were just common three letter terms, three letter words that could have been used. But, again, it's - some have been prohibited, some are allowed, some aren't. And it's the historical arrangement.

And one of the other notes to make as part of that - as part of the summary paper is that there's no consistency between ASCII and IDN three letter strings. Again, that's just a historical observation.

I was just going to pause for a moment, again, I'm not part of the room - not part of the room at the moment but is there a hand up at the moment, Lars or Bart or anyone else or Nathalie...

((Crosstalk))

Bart Boswinkel: No, Paul. No, Paul. Go ahead.

Paul Szyndler: Excellent, thank you. I've numbed everybody off into agreement, that's wonderful. And the third part of the executive summary, the third issue that we were looking at, aside from two letter strings and three letter strings, was the long and short form of - form names of countries and territories. So...

Bart Boswinkel: Paul, there's just - maybe that's for historical reasons. Jaap just entered in the chat that alpha 3 strings were always considered irrelevant in the early days of the Internet. That's why the alpha 2 strings were picked at the time.

Paul Szyndler: Jaap, thank you very much. That's a very good observation. The relevance or otherwise of the strings is worth noting now but - and I acknowledge that that back in the day, back at the time, they may have been acknowledged as irrelevant and therefore other strings - three letter strings in particular may have been utilized even though there may have been a potential conflict.

But the point is now we're at the stage where we're trying to analyze whether there is - whether there are or are not conflicts and whether there or are not concerns and what consistencies or inconsistencies may arise. But, no that's a very good point, Jaap. Thank you.

When it comes to long and short form versions of country and territory names, when it comes to the Applicant Guidebook it prohibits country and territory names in all languages which is a very broad definition. It was a catch-all statement that was inserted to provide an overall protection for the use of country and territory names.

But the problem is that once you start looking at the number of languages that - all languages was the definition - you start thinking about how many languages potentially are out there and how many country and territory names are out there, the number of permutations is just amazing. And you end up with a - largely speaking - an unenforceable rule when it comes to an overall rule with the exception of taking it on a case by case basis.

And then different organizations have different definitions, different lists, different names, interpretations of what they call a country or a territory and therefore it's - it is very difficult to maintain a definitive list and no one could argue at the moment which one is authoritative.

This results in, as we've said previously, unpredictability and not just for - and this is why we have ccNSO - sorry, ccTLD participants and gTLD participants, potential applicants for new gTLDs, etcetera, involved in this group because any of the unpredictability affects all stakeholders so no one is exactly sure as to what we can do in terms of interpreting a language or the script that we use or how current policy can apply depending on those previous factors.

So, again, it's a complicated area and that is just scratching the surface of what the study group that preceded this working group looked at. I just wanted to pause there because that was essentially just my reading through of the summary paper or the summary - executive summary that Lars and Bart had developed.

Just want to stop for a moment to see if there were any questions from anyone at the moment.

Lars Hoffman: I think Jaap has raised his hand and Annebeth as well, Paul.

Paul Szyndler: Oh thank you, thank you. I'm lagging but yes, please, go ahead.

Jaap Akkerhuis: Yes, I want to add something to the long and short for names, a discussion in summary. In the (unintelligible) report there is a big table about where various sources differ. And I have to report now that there have been new version of ISOC 3166 published in - I think it was November or in December, very shortly. And basically the text now says that the ISOC will take the United Nation to (unintelligible) as the source for the - for the names of the long and short names of the countries.

And actually what also happened beginning this month is that some of the names have, indeed, been aligned now with interim database and if they exist in the interim database.

And the other thing we need to mention is that the long and short names are actually changing even more often then (unintelligible), I mean, I think over the last four years Bolivia changed its name four times and nearly every time is the plural name of - with a kind of difference in - depending on changes in the constitutions.

And that happens with a lot of countries, there's some subtle differences in the names of these although the code maintains the same. I mean, that also explains why, I mean, (unintelligible) Armenia 10 different historical names, well, that's part of the reason. The code is still the same.

Paul Szyndler: Thank you for that, Jaap. That's a couple of very good points you raise there and it just serves to highlight the way in which these list the dynamic and the way in which an authoritative list is difficult to establish because, well, the things.

And now I'm properly in the Adobe room so I take Carlos's point about Bolivia having (unintelligible) every other year. That's a very valid point; these things change. And one can't rely or an organization can't rely on the static list of names or representation of names.

Annebeth, I note you still had your hand up, would you like to contribute now?

Annebeth Lange: Sure. Thank you. Actually the more we come into letters like long - we have short form, long form, three letter and two letter strings. And the longer the names are the more complicated it will be. And all these different languages and all the different scripts, it's, as we have talked about in the study group, it seems to be very, very complicated to have a list of anything at all.

But when we go down to the three letter strings and the two letter strings at least we have a kind of form it's possible to handle much easier in a way even if these representations also ends up in long and short form names, it's so many variations like Jaap said. And they are changing all the time.

And another point is that if you look historically dotCom doesn't mean - it's not a geographical kind of thing when it's in use. It's not in - it's not possible to confuse it with dotCO even if dotCO has been using their country codes more commercial than in the original form.

So it is a difference if we should have the three letter codes, ISO, in competition with the two letter codes for the same country or using them as a more generic term. So that might be useful to think about as well.

Paul Szyndler: Annebeth, thank you for that. Were there any other comments before I headed on - I was just summarizing the paper that had been circulated to everyone and presented in the Adobe room but were there any other further comments before I continued on?

Bart Boswinkel: No not really, Paul.

Paul Szyndler: Thank you, Bart. The next item of the agenda was we were heading on to how we were going to plan ahead so it's difficult at this stage because this teleconference was largely a reintroduction into this group's work for 2015. I acknowledge that we've been largely distracted by the fact that we had a

commentary that we focused on to submit to the GAC or a subgroup of the GAC late last year.

So for the most part we're basically just trying to get back into the rhythm of things before we have a meeting in Singapore. But the plan was for the next step that we would have some sort of option paper so something that would look at each of these categories. And we'd only bitten off three; we'd only grabbed three of the areas that we were talking about and Annebeth had drawn a distinction between some of them.

But realistically I don't think this was a major agenda item; it was just an acknowledgement that perhaps the group might work towards some options, some ideas, how we would identify the issues that we have with regards to country and territory names before Singapore, possibly on the next teleconference, and then better develop them when we meet face to face in February. And that was largely the agenda item as far as I understand.

Bart Boswinkel: Alternatively, Paul, say, if you look at the overall agenda, say, the Singapore meeting is going to be a - I would say a turning point in the sense of at that time, say, now we've been working on the, say, establishing the baselines for future work so that's the, say, the three major deliverables you alluded to in your introduction. And this group needed to establish whether that's still applicable before we move forward. So that's done, that's almost completed now.

The next stage would be to check the feasibility of a framework and if the working group considers if feasible then we start moving into developing so that's the real substantial work. I think, say, and that's what Lars and I have been discussing.

It might be useful that, say, for the next call in preparation of the Singapore meeting, we draft a kind of high level paper that we have - close in some options for a framework to get some idea of the group itself. And these will be

extremes to understand, say, where the group is with regard to its thinking on feasibility or to trigger a discussion on feasibility. Because I think by now we need to really get into the substantive work of this group itself.

Paul Szyndler: That's right and, Bart, if I...

((Crosstalk))

Paul Szyndler: It's Paul here again. If I could paraphrase what you've said, this is really where we're getting down to the detail, to the hard work of the group.

Bart Boswinkel: Yeah.

Paul Szyndler: And that's not - not summarizing, not going back over what we've looked at before but can we actually - could we, as a group, propose some sort of framework going forward for how country and territory names could be treated in a unified manner or in a uniform - unified is a lazy term but a consistent...

Bart Boswinkel: Yeah.

Paul Szyndler: ...manner as opposed to the way things are currently. And that's what the group really needs to start heading towards.

Bart Boswinkel: Yeah. And as a first major decisions whether they think it's feasible and in order to get there you need to do some iterations.

Paul Szyndler: Yes, that's right. Again it relates back to the work that the study group performed previously which was we put out case studies, we put out examples and it gets people thinking and that's what we intend to do and hopefully working group members will agree that we'll proceed with that sort of modus operandi for this group and hopefully we'll get some ideas back.

Bart Boswinkel: Yeah.

Paul Szyndler: The next - just to note, the next agenda item that we had marked down was a review of issues that need addressing. These were a couple of ideas that Lars and Bart and some staff had put together in terms of are there any issues with regard to the two letter codes, the three letter codes and also the long and short form names and country and territory names that I'd summarized previously.

I don't actually want to go through all of it but - because it is - there were a preliminary set of questions. Were there any comments from anyone in terms of some of the issues of the way, aside from what Jaap had said the way two letter names and two letter codes are treated at the moment, three letter codes and also long and short form. It was just a preliminary question. And I don't think everybody needs to work through those. But were there any comments at the moment?

Carlos, are you actually on the teleconference at the moment or just only on the Adobe room?

Carlos Gutierrez: I'm on the phone. And, yes, I have Adobe.

Paul Szyndler: Did you make a comment there about - you just made a comment recently, I just wanted to ask you to expand on that.

Carlos Gutierrez: No, I just - as Bart said they want to develop some cases. I wanted to raise some issues because some (unintelligible) regions have a very community-based approach. And on the other hand we have a now commercial approach on the Latin American region with the dotLat.

So if they are going to look for cases to present and discuss I was suggesting that we take a look of who is proposing it as well because maybe Jordi is on the line can explain a little bit the background of the Catalonian case, which in

my view is totally different from the commercial approach that the Latin American group is taking. But we can develop that further down the road. It was just a note for Bart and Lars. Thank you.

Paul Szyndler: Thank you, Carlos. We'd use various examples throughout the work of the study group with regards to terms like - as we've included there, dotNIC and otherwise reserved terms and then other examples that I've thrown in such as dotCan for Canada or dotAnd for Andorra which were not necessarily deserving of specific protection or specific thing drawn as an example other than that they are common terms in the English language and it might reasonably be applied for as a new gTLD.

So there's any number of permutations there and that specific issue is the reason why we have such a complex task ahead of us. I didn't actually want to work through all of the questions that have been listed on the agenda in terms of are there concerns about predictability or non-predictability because the group has collectively been hit with that or had that issue raised with them on too short a notice.

But I did want to note that we are now, from this point on, going to get into the core issue of how do we deal with the variability of the way country and territory names are treated. And this is really, from this point on, probably our next teleconference and then as we meet in Singapore, we really need to tackle some key issues.

And those questions that Lars had developed as part of our agenda for this call probably serve best as an aid memoir for the time being as the - something that everyone needs to think about especially as our co-chairs work together to develop a - well options paper or a strawman that they may be called for the upcoming meeting.

Lars or Bart, did you want to work through the logistical details that we were going to have about upcoming meetings because I would be a terrible person to rely upon to handle that.

Bart Boswinkel: Lars, go ahead or should I do it?

Lars Hoffman: No that's fine, Bart, I can go ahead. Thanks.

Bart Boswinkel: Yeah.

Lars Hoffman: This is Lars for the transcript. The next meeting for the full group is - we have another conference call before Singapore, it's on Tuesday the 27th of January at 11 UTC, so the same time as today so, two weeks from yesterday.

Then (unintelligible) the next agenda point that I might as well cover here that talking about the GAC - the group spoke about meeting with the GAC in Singapore. And the feedback is that it will be unlikely that the subgroup on geographic names, which this group has written a letter, will actually be able to join our group when we meet in Singapore.

But they welcome attendance from our group to their meeting when they are discussing geographic names. And this will take place on Wednesday in Singapore the 11th of February and that's scheduled at 10:30 am at the moment. But I'll send a reminder of that to the group as well.

But I think it would be very good if as many of us could be there and point the subgroup to the points that were raised in the letter that was sent to them and maybe start that dialogue.

And then our meeting in Singapore, Bart, I have to refer to you, I think it's on Thursday morning?

Bart Boswinkel: No, it's not on Thursday morning, it's a Monday afternoon, quarter past 12 until quarter to 2. The reason is to avoid overlap with the Accountability group and other discussions so it's right in between and to allow for a meeting with the GAC. I don't know whether they will show up but it's scheduled for - and we - for quarter past 12 and until quarter to 2 on Monday afternoon.

Lars Hoffman: Yeah, thank you Bart.

Paul Szyndler: And it's Paul here. I think that's pretty much covered - our plan scheduled as we move forward. We will have another teleconference and our engagement will get a little more dense as we move on. The key issues are obviously that engagement with the GAC and - or at least the subgroup of. I understand it's problematic but it's something that we need to remain conscious of and keep acting on.

And other than that I just want to move on to is there any other business in terms of further agenda items before we wrap up today?

Lars Hoffman: Paul, Annebeth has raised her hand.

Paul Szyndler: Oh I'm sorry. Yes, Annebeth, go ahead, please.

Annebeth Lange: Hello, it's Annebeth Lange here. I just wanted to say a few words about the question from Maxim. He asks a question, "Does our field of interest covers only TLDs or ccTLDs too?" And the reason for that this is interesting for the ccTLDs and also primarily for the governments is of course that the ccTLDs - they have been the ones representing the different countries.

And then the government and the GAC representatives representing the governments they are interested in not having too much confusion between the generic terms, the commercial use of TLDs and the country representations. That's why the country and territory names has been

protected for this round and the reason behind the thought of the governments as well. In that way the CCs are involved.

Do you agree on that, Bart? You've been there from the start and Paul.

Bart Boswinkel: I'll let Paul do this.

Paul Szyndler: Yes, absolutely I agree. There is - this is an area where there's great synergy between ccTLD managers or country code representatives and governments with regards to their representation of country - of country names as far as we're concerned. So our primary focus is of course as ccTLDs, the two that are code representations.

But there is a potential and a particular interest from governments when it comes to three letter codes and all of the other permutations that we are yet to discuss. So I wholeheartedly agree with Annebeth.

Acknowledging that I don't want to particularly keep everybody else online unnecessarily, were there any final comments that anybody else wanted to raise as other business or? Well in that case thank you very much. Lars, our next call was - sorry, could you reiterate that for me again?

Lars Hoffman: Sure, it's Tuesday the 27th of January, two weeks yesterday.

Paul Szyndler: And that is the call in which we will start getting into - this was largely a historical experience going back over, hopefully setting a platform for the common understanding amongst working group members of where we had been and where the study group had come from and some of the issues that have been raised, not necessarily answering questions but we will get into the nitty-gritty so to speak of answering that as we get onto the next call and subsequent ones.

So if there are no further comments, thank you very much, all for your time. And I'll look forward to speaking to you on the very next teleconference.

Annebeth Lange: Thank you, Paul.

Paul Szyndler: Thanks, everybody.

Bart Boswinkel: Thank you. Bye all.

((Crosstalk))

Nathalie Peregrine: Thank you very much, (Evie). You may now stop the recordings. Have a good day.

END