Summary Draft Final Report Geographic Regions WG.

Principle
The Working Group believes that the general principle of Geographic Diversity is valuable and should be preserved. No dissenting opinions have been received.

Issues identified
The Working Group has found that extending the principles of geographic diversity beyond the Board to other structures and communities has been largely effective. However:

- The ICANN Board directed Staff to assign countries to geographic regions on the basis of the United Nations Statistics Division's (UNSD) current classifications. As currently comprised, the five ICANN geographic regions are significantly different from those defined by the UNSD. Over time since the year 2000, any connection to the UNSD classifications has eroded as the concept of geographic diversity has been expanded beyond application to the ICANN Board and extended to include other organizational structures (primarily Supporting Organization and Advisory Committees – "SOs and ACs") within the ICANN community.

- The ICANN geographic regions as currently defined do not equate to any internationally recognized method of defining the regions of the world, nor do they reflect the current make-up of the Internet community (and it is questionable that they have ever done so).

As a result a large number of anomalies were created that should be resolved. As the ICANN organization continues to mature, the Working Group believes it is critical for the organization now to adopt a more rigorous approach by re-defining a clear and consistent classification framework that assigns countries and territories to regions.

Recommendations
1. ICANN should adopt its own Geographic Regions Framework based upon the assignment of countries to regions that currently underlies the organization of the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs). This new framework system should govern the make-up of the ICANN Board and should serve as the default for other parts of the ICANN community.
2. The Board should give all individual ICANN Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees the opportunity to either directly apply the new framework to their operations or to present the Board with their own particular diversity methodology that is more appropriate to their unique operational and community characteristics. This is NOT suggesting that each SO or AC should be permitted to create its own regional framework. Either the ICANN-wide framework is used or some alternate method of ensuring diversity can be proposed for Board review and approval.

3. The Board should consider adopting a more general process by which sovereign representatives can petition for re-assignment to a different region taking into account the following constraints: no "ad-hoc" reassignments; any re-assignment needs support form the government of the country or territory; consideration of restricting reassignement to an adjacent region.
4. ICANN is recommended to seek ways to recognize and accommodate Special Interest Groups or Sub-regions. These "bottom-up" groupings would be complementary to the formal regional framework, and would not replace it. They would not form any part of ICANN's decision-making structure but would be free to lobby for the support of elected representatives.

Rationale for recommendations
Based on its research and exchanges with the community, the Working Group concludes that reducing the number of ICANN regions is neither a desired nor a viable option. For example, community members have expressed concern that the size and allocation of the current regions already requires some community members to travel large distances to participate in regional events.
In addition to promoting geographic diversity, ICANN's structures and processes should lower barriers for participation and engagement by community members as much as practicable.

Increasing the number of regions would have a substantial impact on the organizational structure, resources, processes and practices of ICANN. The addition of even one region to the framework would almost certainly require the Board and ICANN communities to adjust or expand their management and administrative structures in some substantial ways.

The Working Group looked closely at the geographic assignment systems of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), The UN Economic and Social Council (UNESC), the ITU, The ITU Council (ITUC), the ITU Telecommunications Development Bureau, the ITU Telecommunications Bureau, the ITU Radiocommunications Bureau and the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs). Each system is different.

In the interests of good governance ICANN must adopt and maintain its own consistent geographic regional framework. The current RIR system divides the world into 5 regions based solely on geographic location. These are: AfriNIC (Africa), APNIC (Asia Pacific), ARIN (Canada, United States and many island nations in the Caribbean and North Atlantic Ocean), LACNIC (Mexico, Central America, South America and Latin America and Caribbean area), and RIPE NCC (Europe, Middle East and parts of Central Asia).

Impact of recommendations
The number of Regions would remain at five, thus avoiding the significant restructuring that would result from a change in the number of regions.

Fundamentally, ICANN is a technical organization. Therefore aligning regions with the technical "infrastructure" of the numbering resource allocation system seems logical and defensible.

If adopted without modification, a total of 62 countries and territories would move to new regions. This would impact the ccNSO in particular. These changes are the result from moving or assigning:
- Territories to their geographic region rather than to the region of their mother country.
- Several Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries out of the current Asia/Pacific/Australia Region into the European (RIPE) Region; This would help to reduce the very wide geographic spread of Asia/Pacific and would also satisfy the wishes of many of the countries involved who consider themselves more orientated towards Europe than Asia.
- Many of the English and French speaking Caribbean territories into the North American (ARIN) Region from the LAC Region (and Europe, in the case of some territories). Most of these countries have closer language, cultural and travel links with North America than they do with Latin America. In addition, increasing the number of countries in what has previously been a numerically very small Region and should increase the options for representation and participation within the Region.

At the same time the Working group noted that:
- No Arab Region would be created although it has been requested;
- Caribbean countries and territories would be split between two Regions, partly on geography and party on language;
- Some countries or territories may not wish to change Regions.
- Some "mother countries" may not wish their territories to be in a different region to themselves.

The Working Group suggested some measures to alleviate these disadvantages.