



Governmental Advisory Committee

13<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

Jonathan Robinson, GNSO Chair  
Byron Holland, ccNSO Chair

Reference: Potential Overlap Work CCWG-UCTN and GAC WG on Protection Geographic Names

Dear Jonathan and Byron,

Thank you for your letter of 26 August 2015 relating concern over potential overlap of the work of the Cross-Community Working Group on the Use of Country and Territory Names as top-level domains (CCWG-UCTN) and the GAC Working Group on the Protection of Geographic Names in the new gTLD process.

The GAC leadership team notes that the mandates and activities of the CCWG-UCTN and GAC WG do not appear to directly overlap as they cover different types of names (ISO 3166-1 identified lists of country and territory names versus geographic and community names that are not necessarily part of officially recognized lists) with a focus on different levels of the domain name system (top-level versus second-level), thereby raising different types of issues.

We do however agree that it is important to achieve consistent frameworks and principles relating to the use of names with geographical meaning in the domain name system and that increased coordination is desirable. We note that, in addition to these working groups' activities, the use of country and territory names at the second-level – both of 2-character codes and of country and territory names – has raised significant attention in the full GAC over the past year or so.

We thank you for inviting more GAC members to participate in the CCWG-UCTN and will strive to increase GAC involvement. A call for volunteers will be sent to the GAC and we will also involve support staff in helping to facilitate GAC participation.

#### **Additional background on the GAC Working Group on Geographic Names**

The GAC Working Group to Examine the Protection of Geographic Names in any Future Expansion of gTLDs (“GAC Working Group on Geographic Names”) was created as an outcome of the July 2013 GAC Durban Communiqué, which stated:

**“Geographic Names** i. The GAC recommends that ICANN collaborate with the GAC in refining, for future rounds, the Applicant Guidebook with regard to the protection of

terms with national, cultural, geographic and religious significance, in accordance with the 2007 GAC Principles on New gTLDs.”

The GAC Geographic Names Working Group has been working actively through conference calls and face-to-face meetings since ICANN’s November 2013 meeting in Buenos Aires. Its objective is to review and consider any necessary improvements to existing protections for geographic names, such as clearly explaining why protections for geographic names are necessary as a matter of good public policy; developing best practice rules to avoid the misuse of geographic and community names as new gTLDs at the top level, and at the same time lowering uncertainties for applicants, trademarks and business, as well as; engaging with the Cross Community Working Group on the use of Country/territory Names as TLDs, and any other ICANN bodies or groups dealing with similar issues.

It is important to note that the Working Group focuses its work on those geographic and community names that are not included in any ISO or United Nations list or other officially recognized lists and that can potentially be used as Top Level Domains.

The GAC Working Group has released several documents and has invited comments from the community, which were presented during the Singapore 52 ICANN meeting and gathered a high level of attention and participation from the whole community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Th. Schneider', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas Schneider  
Chair, Governmental Advisory Committee