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## ICANN Transcription

### IDNs EPDP Team

**Thursday, 09 December 2021 at 13:30 UTC**

Note: 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. Attendance and recordings of the call are posted on agenda wiki page: <https://community.icann.org/x/vge7Cg>

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DEVAN REED:

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening. Welcome to the IDNs EPDP Call taking place on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 13:30 UTC. In the interest of time, there will be no roll call. Attendance will be taken by the Zoom room. If you are only on the telephone, could you please let yourselves be known now.

We have apologies from Tomslin Samme-Nlar. All members and participants will be promoted to panelists for today's call. Members and participants, when using the chat, please select Everyone in order for everyone to see the chat. Observers will remain as an attendee and we'll have view only status.

Statements of Interest must be kept up to date. If anyone has any updates to share, please raise your hand or speak up now. If you need assistance updating your Statements of Interest, please e-mail the GNSO secretariat.

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All documentation and information can be found on the IDNs EPDP Wiki space. Recordings will be posted on the public Wiki space shortly after the end of the call.

Please remember to state your name before speaking for the transcript. As a reminder, those who take part in that ICANN multistakeholder process are to comply with the Expected Standards of Behavior.

Thank you, and over to the chair, Donna Austin, to begin.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Devan. Welcome, everybody. We are going to try to get through a few new charter questions today. Just a reminder that the 13<sup>th</sup> of December is the deadline for comments on questions on the draft language for questions A1, A2, and A3. So hopefully folks are making their way through that. As I said, if we have substantive comments, we'll take some time to discuss those on the call next week.

But if it looks like it's just rewording or non-substantive changes, then we will do that without a call and just let people know when we've refined the language and we think it's in good shape. So just a reminder that that's due on Monday.

We did try to get some members from SSAC to join this call so that we could continue our discussion of question A5, but we weren't able to do that. And I had some back and forth with Rod Rasmussen, and what we will try to do in the new year is have a dedicated time where we have some of the experts from SSAC on the call to take us through some of the SSAC guidance on IDNs. I

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think, in particular, SAC060 SAC052 as it relates to some of the discussions we've had. I think that's probably a better use of the time from the experts at SSAC and also this group.

So what we'll do is a little bit of work in between to make sure we've ... . We might actually seek input from the group here about specific questions they might have for SSAC. So it's a little bit more of a targeted rather than a rambling conversation. So we'll try to set that up for early next year.

Just a personal note that I'm going to be working from Australia for the next three months. I'm going to try to keep the calls at the time that we've agreed to, but if things get a little bit tough I might ask the group if we can give some thought to changing the time for this call. I don't want to disrupt the group, so I'll try to maintain the time and as it is.

But also, Ariel sent a note to the group earlier this week to see—or it might have been late last week—to see whether the group is amenable to changing next week's call to 24 hours later than usual. This is to accommodate a clash with the GNSO Council call at this time next week. So we didn't see any objections. We had some positive responses, so we're going to go ahead with that. So next week we won't meet at this time, but it will be 24 hours later, if that makes any sense. So just be mindful of that.

Ariel, have I missed anything in the intro? Unfortunately, one of the challenges of being in Australia is that you don't have that real time exchange with the staff team. So I just want to make sure with Ariel that I ... Yep, all good? [inaudible]. All right.

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So what we're going to do, we had some good discussion around A5 last week, and I was hoping that we'd be in a position to continue that this week. But I think it would be helpful to have some SSAC input to that conversation, so we're going to set that aside for now and we'll come back to it when we've made arrangements to have experts from SSAC come and talk to us.

You know, we also had some conversation last week about whether we can tackle some of the questions that we're tackling now or whether we should wait until we've had conversations about other charter questions. So it might be better to speak about it first and then come back to some of the ones we've discussed. It really is difficult about this chicken and egg and what conversations are dependent on other questions.

So the other thing that I did during last week is that I had a chat with Dennis Tan. Dennis was the chair of the Chartering Group that put the charter for this work together, and Dennis has given some thought to how we could possibly rearrange the way that we're moving through the questions. And during the break between Christmas and the new year—or I should say the break during holiday season—we'll give some more thought to whether it makes sense to reorganize the way that we're working through the charter questions.

So I just wanted to mention that we did hear the suggestion and we are having a look at that in the background to see if there's a way that we can reorganize the charter questions to make it a better sequential flow. But that will take us a little bit of time to get through.

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So with that, we're going to leave question A5 aside. And I think, Ariel, we're going to start with A6. Correct?

ARIEL LIANG: Yes, that's correct.

DONNA AUSTIN: Okay. So Ariel, can I hand it over to you to take us through the background? And then we'll get into the discussion.

ARIEL LIANG: Of course. Thanks, Donna. So as a previous meeting step we'll go through the introduction of the charter question and provide some preliminary materials and analysis for consideration before the team dives into the details. So I will start A6 introduction.

So in general, this question is asking about a sort of edge case. If the RZ-LGR goes through an update and invalidates an existing TLDs label and there are variant labels, if any, what to do. So I will just read through the question itself, the first part. And on the top is the context, and then the question itself is in the blue box.

"Since RZ-LGR can be updated over time, the working group needs to consider the implications for existing TLD labels and their variant labels (if any), including any potential changing of status or disposition value."

"The TSG, the Technical Study Group for RZ-LGR utilization, further recommends that the Generation Panel must call out the exception where an existing TLD is not validated by their

proposed solution during the public comment period and explain the analysis and reasons for not supporting the existing TLD in their script LGR proposal. This will allow the community and the GP to review such a case to confirm that an exception is indeed warranted.

And then the question itself is, “Does the working group agree with TSG’s suggested approach? If so, to what extent should the TLD policies and procedures be updated to allow an existing TLD and its variants (if any), which are not validated by a script LGR, to be grandfathered? If not, what is the recommended approach to address changes to the current version of the RZ-LGR that assign different disposition values to existing TLDs? Consider this question by taking into account the data to be collected in the ‘Data and Metric Requirements’ section of this charter.

So just to refresh folks’ minds about the data, it’s mainly related to the time period for a script proposal to be developed. The reasons and script proposal where RZ-LGR needs to be updated. So that’s the data that Sarmad’s team collected that have relations to this charter question.

And I think I already saw hands up. Donna, would you like me to stop and let folks speak up?

DONNA AUSTIN:

Yes, please. Let’s go to Dennis and then Michael.

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DENNIS TAN:

Thank you, Donna. Thank you, Ariel, for the background context. So let me put my TSG hat here. I was part of the effort. Actually, I was the chair of the TSG. So I wanted to provide a little bit more context as to how the TSG came up with this recommendation.

So we're talking about Recommendation 7 from the TSG paper and the [inaudible] Recommendation 12. Recommendation 7 is addressed to ICANN Organization and the IDNs EPDP ... Well, we're the proxy of that target audience. And Recommendation 12 was direction to the Integration Panel and Generation Panel. And when we look at these issues, the Root Zone LGR was a prior version than it is today, so that was something that is a face. Right? Root Zone LGR is not mean to be status, but its ambition to evolve and update whether it's to include new scripts or update the ones already existing. And during this update, maybe, potentially, some code points, letters—I'm using "letters" here very broadly—might come in, or some others removed. And new rules could be put in place such that variant labels might be different from previous versions of it.

So the TSG was looking at this in a vacuum. This is possible because the Root Zone LGR is based on a subset of IDNA2008, a protocol. And the IDNA itself is based on Unicode properties. And the Root Zone LGR has no control over the protocol itself, and the protocol itself does control what happens within Unicode.

So even if there is a possibility of this happening and, on the other side, there are certain measures that make the probability low ... For example, the Integration Panel works on this subset of IDNA2008, working on a stable version of Unicode. Right? So it's not working on the latest version of Unicode which might be

adjusted in the newer version, but it works on a stable one such that those code points that are already in that version are very unlikely to be removed or changed in properties or what have you.

So again, I just want us to work in that context that while the TSG saw this as possible, the probably of it happening may be low. But we need to think about the consequences if such an even happens and what to do next instead of, when that happens, “Oh, what do we do?” Right? So it’s kind of [more completeness]. We know this might happen and we have a [inaudible] solution for it rather than start saying, “Okay, what happens when a TLD is not compliant with the Root Zone LGR? Then what’s next? Right? And there is no solution for it.

So I hope that’s helpful context for us to start the discussion on this topic. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Dennis. And I think Ariel will cover some of that when she goes through the explanation and the context for this. So it’s very useful to have your take on this as well.

Michael and the Hadia. And just a reminder that Ariel does have a little bit more to go through here. But let’s see what Michael and Hadia have to say. And if Ariel’s going to cover some of that in in the explanation, then we’ll get to that.

So Michael and then Hadia.



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MICHAEL BAULAND: Thanks. Should we already express our opinions or should we wait for Ariel to continue. Sorry, I didn't get that.

DONNA AUSTIN: Michael, if you're comfortable with waiting until after Ariel has provided the context, that might be helpful.

MICHAEL BAULAND: Sure.

DONNA AUSTIN: And Hadia, a question for you. Are you okay to wait until Ariel finishes [the] context?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Yes, Donna. I am. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: Okay. Thank you very much, [folks]. Okay, go ahead, Ariel.

ARIEL LIANG: And thanks very much Donna, Michael, and Hadia. I appreciate the patience. And indeed, I'm going to cover some preliminary points and research just to tee up the conversation and it may very well be very similar points as Dennis mentioned. But we just want to clarify that and lay it in front of the EPDP Team so that the discussion can be more efficient.

So first, let's just quickly look at the scope of the question A6. The intent is actually focusing on future updates of RZ-LGR and its implementation on existing gTLDs in the future. So that includes the current existing gTLDs and the ones in the pipeline as well as the gTLDs that may come to exist in the future. So that's the scope of the question.

And we'll just want to quickly double-check whether all current existing gTLDs are valid. And based on the data collected by Sarmad's team, they're indeed valid. So this question doesn't really apply to the current existing gTLDs, but we still need to consider future implications when RZ-LGR is updated, what may happen. So that's the scope of this question.

And if you recall, in Sarmad's and Pitinan's presentation in the past, they collected data with regard to the triggering event for RZ-LGR update. Before we dive into the detail, I just want to provide a staff analysis based on the possible events that we saw. They mostly result in adding more materials to the RZ-LGR rather than subtracting existing materials to the RZ-LGR.

So just to illustrate the point, some of the trigger events include, but are not limited to, evidence that an additional existing code point is needed for one of the languages considered.

A second example. "Additional language being considered, not considered before for the script; with reasons why the language should be considered now." So as you recall, in the different versions of RZ-LGR, more and more languages are added. So I think that's one trigger event for RZ-LGR update, is to add additional languages and scripts.

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Third example. “A constraint on labels in a script can be relaxed without issues to accommodate a particular language.” So it’s basically making a very conservative rule to be more relaxed in the future so that additional materials or code points can be added in the RZ-LGR in the future.

And the forth example. “Update in Unicode version with additional code points available for a script.” Again, that’s to add materials rather than subtracting. So these are some of the examples for triggering the RZ-LGR update.

And another key point. We hope the EPDP Team can remember or note is that invalidating an existing gTLD and its variant labels by the proposed RZ-LGR update is an extremely unlikely scenario because it will cause instability in the root-zone.

So we got to this analysis by looking at part of the RZ-LGR overview and summary. There’s an important paragraph here that we put on the slide. So I’ll just read this through.

“Ideally, the Root Zone LGR would be comprehensive, that is, include all

scripts eligible for the root zone from its first version. The goal for all future versions of the LGR must be to retain full backward compatibility so that they preserve the output of any label registration against the old LGR when applied to an updated LGR. Consequently, the IP (the Integration Panel) anticipates that succeeding versions of the LGR will be strict supersets of their predecessors. It is expected that registrations that predate the initial release of an LGR covering the respective script will be

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allowed to remain, even if in conflict, but without becoming a binding precedent for the LGR itself. To date, there is no known instance of such a conflict.”

So in summary, this paragraph shows that basically, the LGR update should make sure the existing gTLD and its variant still be valid and not to remove them in the root zone. And if you look at the illustration on the right, each update will probably be bigger. So adding more material than the previous version but not to subtract materials from the existing version. And in that way, it will be able to retain full backward compatibility for a future update.

But again, this is important information in the current RZ-LGR-4. Although it's hard to predict the future, but this is what the current principal looks like. So for invalidating existing gTLDs and its variant by the proposed update, that scenario is extremely unlikely due to this backward compatibility principle.

And just go back to the question itself. What this question is asking is for in extremely rare edge cases, if an update for the RZ-LGR actually invalidates an existing gTLD and its variant label, what will happen. So basically, the TSG provided a recommendation. What and label what will happen so basically the PSG provided a recommendation when, in the event that the backward compatibility cannot be achieved, what would happen.

So the recommendation is for the Generation Panel to call out such an exception that the existing TLD is not validated by their proposed solution during the public comment period and explain the analysis and reasons for not supporting the existing TLD in their script LGR proposal. I that way, this will allow the community

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and Integration Panel to review such a case to confirm that an exception is indeed warranted.

So then the question for the EPDP team is to consider whether the team agrees with the TSG's suggested approach to call those exception in the public comment period. And then also, to what extent the TLD policies and procedures need to be updated to grandfather an existing TLD and its variant which are not validated by the updated RZ-LGR.

So that's the question. And then are the contexts and materials related to the question. I will stop here.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Ariel. So as we think about this question, one of the things that strikes me is whether there is additional information that perhaps the GP could provide during the public comment period. So with the TSG's suggested approach, is there anything else that we think should be provided during the public comment period? And what I was thinking about was something that Maxim mentioned, the potential damage to the TLD. So maybe whether folks want to think about whether that's something that should be highlighted in the public comment period as well.

So I'm going to go to Michael and then, Hadia, we'll come back to you, assuming that you still have a question. So, Michael.

MICHAEL BAULAND:

Thanks, Donna In general, I agree with the TSG's suggestion. And even though, as said, it's unlikely, I see two theoretical cases that

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could happen to existing TLDs. On the one hand, the Root Zone LGR could say that an existing TLD string is not valid anymore. It wouldn't be a valid update by the current version of the Root Zone LGR. And the second possibility would be that the Root Zone LGR says that an already existing variant of an existing TLD is not an allocatable variant anymore.

Both cases would mean that the current situation would not be compatible with the Root Zone LGR. And in my opinion, research in these cases says that the existing TLDs should remain as they are, kind of in a frozen state, so to say that they will not be allowed to get further variant TLDs if not valid with a new Root Zone LGR.

But all existing TLDs and existing variant relationships should be kept. That's my opinion. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Michael. Maxim.

MAXIM ALZOBA: I think we need to check if whatever we create is in line with the bylaws of ICANN because in situations where some technical panel decides that something in the root, potentially registrars or registrants, needs to go, maybe it's time to review what the group is doing, not remove the whole TLD.

I understand that in situations where the current TLD wants to extend itself by adding some variant, it creates issues. Then these new variants should not be proceeded with. But saying highly unlikely and creating potentially extremely damaging situations for

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the stability and security of the Internet should not be installed in the policy we create because it could be played sooner or later, just a matter of time.

So I suggested that for new variants of the TLDs, there might be a possibility that it shouldn't be proceeded with. But the current TLD with live registrations shouldn't be dismissed because it will cause more damage to the Internet's stability and to the end users. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Maxim. So it's important that we take into consideration potential damage to registrants here as well. So if we thought about what would happen if GoDaddy Registry runs .biz that has a large number of registrants—not as large as some other TLDs—but what would the consequence if there was a proposal that said, “.biz doesn't work anymore, so we think we should close it down”? So there would be a serious consequence to that. So I think that's what Maxim is getting to with his comments. Not that I'm trying to speak for Maxim.

Hadia, go ahead

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Donna. First I would like to note that I definitely agree with grandfathering existing TLDs and variants in cases such as the root zone Label General Rules do not support a specific string. However, I would like to note that the goal, as stated, for Label Generation Rules says that all future versions of the Label

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Generation Rules must be to retain fully background compatibility. And I stress here on “must.”

So currently, we have no such cases. And in the future, also, it is expected not to have such cases. So thought I understand that we need to pass something that grandfathers strings that are no longer supported, this should not be a green card or a green pass for Generation Panels in order not to make sure that they need to retain full background compatibility.

So I would say yes, we need to pass something just in case, but however this should not be a green pass for Generation Panels. If we do issue such a policy, we should stress the role of Label Generation Rules panels and their commitment to retaining full background compatibility. So we should make sure that this situation never happens and remains a hypothetical one. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Hadia. Do we have any other comments from other folks? So I think what I’m hearing is that—Ariel, can you go to the question, please—that there is certain support for grandfathering existing TLDs and potentially their variants with the emphasis being that the “must” component of the backward compatibility piece that Hadia has just called out. So we acknowledge from Dennis’s early intervention that this is an unlikely scenario, but important that we cover it.

Dennis, go ahead.



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DENNIS TAN:

Thank you, Donna. Yes. I think we are converging to a couple of options here. Retaining backward compatibility or grandfathering in the other phase as a plan B, if you will, for lack of a better word. Again—right—the possibility is there, but [inaudible].

Ariel has given us a very useful presentation of the locks and controls that are in place for that not to happen. So again, we talked about the unlikelihood of such an event happening because we have a high for a Generation Panel to really support or push for a version of their proposal that it's not backward compatible. So it would have to be a very extremely rare situation where ... It's a perfect storm. Right? Unicode changes, IDNA protocol changes, and what have you.

Okay. So where was I going with this? Oh, yeah. The thing is, and maybe this is a question for my own understanding. Would a recommendation which potentially becomes consensus policy within the gTLD process have any enforcement over whatever the Integration Panel/Generation Panels need to do such that consensus policy say, "You need to be backward compatible. Period"?

If that's not the case, then we just need to control whatever we can control. And that is what goes into the root and remains in the root. Therefore, the grandfathering option seems to be the viable avenue for us to control these—again, unlikely scenarios, but small possibility—and is accounted for. Thank you.

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DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Dennis. I think there's an interesting question in here with the TSG's proposal that there's an explanation required in the public comment period. And there's an open question of what happens as a result of that public comment period if there is extreme dissatisfaction, I suppose, expressed in the public comment period in the unlikely situation that we get to where the Generation Panel is recommending that an existing TLD is at risk here. So how would the Generation Panel respond to that?

Maxim, go ahead.

MAXIM ALZOBA: I think the Generation Panel which usually contains technical experts, maybe linguistical experts, shouldn't have such ultimate powers. My suggestion is that in a situation where they discover such unlikely circumstances, they make a special report to the Board, potentially, and then the Board starts the [Board's interaction] with the constituencies. Without it, we create situations where some process not being a part of the multistakeholder model is allowed to call huge damage to basically all components of what we see now.

Thus, I suggest that their power should be limited to a special report. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Maxim. I guess that's another interesting question. We're talking extreme cases here. right? And the data that Ariel has presented is that we don't currently have a problem with existing TLDs in the Label Generation version 5, I think. So we know this

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isn't an existing problem. But I think there's a question here that if the Generation Panel was to recommend that a TLD ... It seems to me that this is similar to retiring a ccTLD. Who ultimately would approve that? That's a kind of separate policy question of its own.

So this does get really complicated, I think, if we don't agree to grandfather the existing TLDs. So maybe that's what we should be focusing on here. If we agree to grandfather the exiting TLD and its variant, then there is really no consequence. But if we don't, then that's where it opens up some of the challenges we're talking about

Hadia, go ahead.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Donna. And there's one more question. So what if we go out and put in our policy grandfathering existing gTLDs that are no longer supported by the Root Zone Label Generation Rules and then you have the community and the GP reviewing the case after a public comment period saying that they do not want to provide this exception? Would this also be applicable?

The recommendation states, "The public comment period, after which the GP and the community will determine if an exception is warranted." So which policy will go ahead in such a case? Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Hadia. That's a good question. Any thoughts from folks on Hadia's question?

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And also I see there's a question in chat from Anil about what's the power of this working group over the TSG, GP, or IP. So the consequence of any policy we develop here, the consequence to that on processes that are in place for the Generation Panel. So this is one of the interesting pieces of ICANN in whether processes are complimentary or whether they're not so.

So maybe that's something we need to try to unpack a little bit as well. But please keep in mind that we're talking about extreme edge case here, and the data that we have in front of us from Ariel says that we don't have an existing problem. But as Dennis said, there's a small possibility that in the future, we could.

Maxim, go ahead.

MAXIM ALZOBA:

Also, I'd like to remind us all that all TLDs, unlike ccTLDs, have contracts, legally binding documents [for] ICANN and a registry. And such change would constitute material change, and there is a special process for that in the registry agreement. And basically, termination of a TLD because some technical expert group said something is well outside what's allowed in the registry agreement. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Yeah. Thanks, Maxim. I guess your point flows the other way from Anil's question about the impact of this policy on the work of the Generation Panel and the consequence of an existing contract, of suggestions they have. So that's almost a big P policy about retiring existing gTLDs for whatever the purpose may be because

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of the consequences to registrars—registrants, I should say—and possibly registrars.

Okay. I'm not sure whether we're getting into the weeds here. I think these are legitimate conversations, so how do we try to pull this back out and see if we can come up with a recommendation on this one, and to my point, whether grandfathering an existing TLD ...

So a policy that requires grandfathering an existing TLD, which in my mind would mean there is no consequence to the existing TLD. They would continue in perpetuity. But others may have a different view on that.

And that [inaudible]. "If Sarmad is on the call ..." Yeah, Sarmad, if you're on the call and have any thoughts about some of the discussion we're having here, I'd be interested to hear it.

And similarly, Edmon, I know that you've been close to all of this. So if you have any thoughts, I think it would be helpful for the group to hear those as well.

Sarmad, I don't mean to put you on the spot, but if you have any thoughts on the conversation, it would be helpful to hear them.

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Thank you, Donna. So I think, as has already been pointed out, that this is a very unlikely scenario. One of the things which is regularly done as part of the development of the RZ-LGR is that GPs—and if the GPs don't do it, the Integration Panel—run each proposal through the existing TLDs database and make sure that

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all the TLDs are supported. And if they're not, investigate why they're not. But of course, that has happened yet.

So, yes, we are actually talking about something which is largely theoretical. I think one of the things one should note is that the GPs, the Generation Panels, the community panels are also quite cautious and weary that they do not want to, I guess, destabilize the root zone in a sense that they do not want to develop a solution where it does not support an existing TLD.

So if something like that happens, if it's a rare case ... And eventually if something like that does happen, there would probably be a very significant reason. And again, as I'm saying, this is a theoretical possibility. I'm not sure whether there's a practical possibility. But if it does happen, there would obviously be a very, very significant reason to do it, at last in the mind of the Generation Panel or the community panel. And if the Integration Panel also agrees to that, there must be something significant.

So, sure, I think grandfathering is a good idea. But it may also be useful to see what is that extreme [inaudible] which is forcing both the Generation Panel and Integration Panel to go to that extreme point before grandfathering.

Again, totally theoretical scenario, but just a perspective for everyone to consider. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Sarmad. Maxim.

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MAXIM ALZOBA:

Actually, the actions of the Generation Panel—[no]—all the groups which created IDN rules basically, version 4, caused some issues. And there are historical facts like a group of technical experts created an illegal rule of one TLD, that all variants should belong to one legal entity without help of legal advisors. And it doesn't look like the area of expertise of [data] experts.

Also, the change in rules caused many ... Basically, there was a change in how the IDN table should be represented, and effectively even despite the promise of ICANN that everything would be grandfathered, all current IDN tables will stay in place, the situation was that the process of certifying that the backend provider for the registry is okay faced a situation where there were demands to change IDN tables for the current TLDs, etc. It means that these things, however unlikely they are, they already happened.

So we need to use words "must" and not to say, "Oh, it will not happen. That's why we are not going to consider it." Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Maxim. And to be clear, I think what you're talking about with the IDN tables is relating to use of second-level IDNs and not top-level, but I do take your point that we can be told one thing and things are imposed that aren't consistent with promises that were made. So that's why the policy is important here.

So Dennis proposed a solution here in chat which seems to have some support, which I'm trying to find. So what Dennis is

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suggesting is, “Perhaps a combination of grandfathering and assurances from ICANN and the Integration Panel that retaining 100% backward compatibility is a hard requirement. Anything contrary to 100%, backward compatibility needs to have a very high bar to pass.”

And it seems from what Sarmad explained, too, that is already the case. But I think for completeness, as Dennis said at the beginning, to have that as policy would provide double assurance, I guess.

Sarmad.

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Yea. I think, as stated by the initial comment which Dennis made, there are actually multiple layers to this work. And the Integration Panel is only one layer. There is the IDNA2008 layer beneath it and the Unicode layer at the base. So one of the possible reasons a change could be motivated in a RZ-LGR in the future is because there is some issue or some change which happens at the IDNA2008 layer or the Unicode layer.

And those are also equally unlikely, by the way, because Unicode also has some stability clauses. But those kinds of changes are not, for example, in ICANN or the Integration Panel’s control. So I guess binding, for example, Integration Panel or ICANN to something which they cannot control also may be a little challenging. Thank you.



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DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Sarmad. I think that's an interesting insight. I'm not sure it changes where we're headed here. Dennis is saying, "Changes to IDNA or Unicode are the high bar to pass."

So I don't see any other hands up, so I think where we are is consistent with what Dennis had recommended in chat and I called out. "A combination of grandfathering and assurances from ICANN and the Integration Panel that retaining 100% compatibility is a hard requirement." It does seem that that is the case because of the use of the word "must."

"Anything contrary to 100% backward compatibility needs to be a very high bar to pass."

So there are two questions I have here: whether we agree with the TSG's suggested approach—and that is, "The TSG further recommends that the Generation Panel must call out the exception where an existing TLD is not validated by their proposed solution during the public comment period and explain the analysis and reasons for not supporting the existing TLD in their LGR proposal."

So I have a question here. If we're going to say that we support the TSG's suggested approach, is there anything else that we think should be included that's not currently part of the recommendation? So I just want to think about that for a minute and see whether folks have any thoughts on that.

Anil. If you're speaking, we can't hear you.

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ANIL KUMAN JAIN: Sorry, Donna. Basically what I'm saying is that in addition to what TSG has suggested and recommended, we may add from the working group that 100% backward compatibility of RZ-LGR may be insured. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Anil. So Dennis, you asked me to repeat my question, which could be a challenge. So I'm just asking that first part of the question, does the working group agree with the TSG's suggested approach?

So I my mind, I think that means the suggested approach—"The TSG further recommends that the Generation Panel must call out the exception where an existing TLD is not validated by their proposed solution during the public comment period" and the rest of that that follows. So whether there's anything else that we think ...

If we agree with the suggestion that it be called out during the public comment period, is there anything else during that public comment period that we would want the Generation Panel to call out as it relates to the exception? But maybe I've misconstrued the intent of the question.

Dennis, go ahead.

DENNIS TAN: Thank you, Donna. Yeah, I think that's the question in face value. Yeah, don the discussion that we just have had, I think, adds that layer of clarity as well for those reading down the line, down the

road, as far as why we support that and maybe provides the reasons why it's important. Right? All these issues that future TLDs that are already validated at the RZ-LGR which is supposed to be the first lock or gate to validate TLDs labels. And having these conflicting versions might be not helpful, not healthy to have.

So I'm not sure [inaudible] it's very clear how to answer the questions, but I think adding our deliberations to it and not sure whether that's going to yield to a policy recommendation. But I think it's useful to explain why a future version of the RZ-LGR needs to be, must be backward compatible.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Denis. And as Justine said in the chat, "In other words, is there anything specific that needs to be covered in the 'analysis and reasons' by a Generation Panel?" And I guess in what I was thinking, in addition here, is the point that Maxim raised about the consequence. So I would suspect that the Generation Panel would give some consideration to the consequence of a recommendation that an existing TLD is not validated.

So the consequence of that, if it's a TLD that has a significant number of registrations within the TLD, then there would be a serious consequence to that. So in my mind, I thought that's probably something that should be addressed by the Generation Panel as well. But maybe that's another policy question for another group.

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Okay, so I think we've had some good discussion on this, and I think where we're leaning is to what Dennis had suggested in the chat which I've read out a couple of times now. And I think we've had plus ones in chat in support for that approach.

So I think what we can do here is wrap up the conversation, that we're all pretty much in agreement with what Dennis has suggested. And we can have the team work out the language and put that into a form of what we've agreed and then the policy recommendation. So everybody comfortable with that?

Satish.

SATISH BABU: Yes, completely comfortable. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: Great, thank you. Okay. Maxim, does that sit with you? I know that you've got some concerns, so I just want to make sure that sit comfortably with you.

Obviously, we'll come back to this. Once we've drafted the language, we'll come back to it and sure that it covers all the concerns. Okay, so Maxim is on board. But again, the language will be the important piece.

Okay, great. So I think we can draw a line under this conversation. So thanks, everybody. Ariel, I think you can tee up A7 for us.

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ARIEL LIANG:

Thanks, Donna. I will provide an introduction to A7. This question is asking, “What mechanism or criteria should be used to identify the scripts/languages appropriate for single-character TLDs?” So single-character means a character in a U-label. “

“Once those scripts/languages are identified, what mechanism or criteria should be used to identify a specific list of allowable characters which can be used as a single-character TLD within such scripts/languages? Should any specific implementation guidance be provided? Furthermore, should the relevant GP (Generation Panel) tag these code points in the RZ-LGR for a consistent analysis and to ease their identification and algorithmic calculation?”

So basically, this question has many part. The first is about “are languages/scripts appropriate for single-character TLDs?” And then the second part is a subset where a specific list of allowable characters in those scripts or languages. And then the third part is about Implementation Guidance related points.

So another key here is that this question is not explicitly asking what languages or scripts should be the candidate for single-character TLDs. It is asking about mechanism or criteria. So this is the intent of this question, but I will provide some further analysis in the following slides.

So just to give you a background overview of this Charter Question A7, there are several existing studies or recommendations already concerning this single-character TLDs for IDNs, and these are the SubPro Recommendation 25.4. That’s the most recent one. And then the TSG reports, Appendix B, also

specifically discussed single-character TLDs. And then in the earlier years, the SSAC has developed a report which is SAC052. And then its Recommendation 1 specifically provides guidance or advice related to single-character TLDs. And then the earliest report is the JIG Final Report on Single Character IDN TLDs. So JIG is basically the Joint ccNSO-GNSO IDN Working Group. They have a report on this specific topic.

So these are the four documents or studies that serve as the origin of Charter Question A7. So let's just take a look at the most recent one which is the SubPro Recommendation 25.4. I will reach the language here.

“Single character gTLDs may be allowed for limited script/language combinations where a character is an ideograph (or ideogram) and do not introduce confusion risks that rise above commonplace similarities consistent with SSAC and Joint ccNSO-GNSO IDN Workgroup (JIG) reports.”

So basically, this separate recommendation already took into account the two previous studies by the SSAC and the JIG group and then developed this recommendation.

And I want to also mention the rationale related to the recommendation. So when the SubPro Working Group developed this recommendation, it believed it is appropriate to limit single-character TLDs to only certain scripts and languages. But the group does not believe it has the relevant expertise to make the determination on which language or script. So that's why it developed this recommendation and welcome the identification of the limited set of scripts and languages that can be the candidate

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for single-character TLDs as well as potentially a specific list of allowable single-character TLDs during implementation.

So it kind of expects that the future IRT can provide that identification for these scripts and languages. And in that way, once these languages and scripts and allowable characters are identified, it will substantially increase the predictability of what will likely still remain a case-by-case manual process. So basically to enhance the efficiency of approving single-character TLDs based on these languages and scripts and characters.

So that's the rationale for the SubPro Recommendation 25.4. Next, let's look at the TSG report, Appendix B. So again the Technical Study Group developed a list of recommendations, but on the single-character aspect, it's not a specific recommendation, per se. It's a note in its appendix, so I'll just read it here.

“Historically, single-character TLDs have not been allowed due to their confusability potential. The SG advises GNSO and ccNSO to review SSAC's SAC052 on the delegation of single-character IDN TLDs. In the event that certain range of code points or entire scripts are permitted to be used for single-character TLD applications based on certain criteria, it may be useful that those code points are appropriately tagged by the relevant Generation Panel in the RZ-LGR for a consistent analysis and to ease their identification and algorithmic calculation.”

So what they recommend is basically asking GNSO to review the SSAC report on single-character TLDs, but also consider a specific implementation-related suggestion for tagging those code

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points in the RZ-LGR. So this is TSG's note on single-character TLDs.

Now let's go back in time to look at the SAC052 report. So the SSAC actually developed this report at the request of the ICANN Board and then to consider the security and stability of aspects of delegating single-character IDNs on the top level. So this report just includes some most pertinent parts based on the staff analysis. It has several findings related to single-character TLDs.

And the most important finding, in staff's view is that "Single-character TLDs are more likely to cause user confusion than TLDs with more than one character."

So the bullet points below are to illustrate this finding to explain why it can cause more user confusion. So basically, if a domain label has more characters it's easier for a user to infer the context and prevent a case of confusion with another label. So that's kind of intuitive.

And then the second point is about several language or scripts. They may have characters that are confusingly similar. So the examples include Latin, Greek, Cyrillic. They share some characters that may look very, very similar. And then the second point, the example are the ones in south Asia—in India, basically—the languages in South Asia that may be very similar in terms of the look of certain characters. And in southeast Asia, Thai and Lao share some characters that may look confusingly similar. So that's some examples.



And then the third point study finds is that there's no current comprehensive inventory of confusable scripts. So that hasn't been identified in terms of those scripts that may have some very similar-looking characters that can cause user confusion. So there's not current study for that.

And then the fourth point is talking about another script, Han, which is a script used by Chinese mainly. And then Japan and Korea also have Jan script. So I that script, some single characters can represent a complete word or idea, but in some cases different single characters can represent the same word or idea. So due to these points, single-character TLDs are more likely to cause user confusion. So that's one important finding in the SAC052 report.

So this report provided actually two recommendations, but I think the deliberation of this charter question, Recommendation 1 is possibly the most pertinent. So what it says is, "Given the potential for user confusion and the currently unfinished work on string similarity and IDN variants, the SSAC recommends a very conservative approach to the delegation of single-character IDN top-level domains."

So there are the lists of specific recommendations under that overarching one. So basically, what SSAC recommends is that until ICANN completes its work on user confusion, string similarity, and IDNs variants, the SSAC recommends 1) the delegation of all single-character IDN TLDs in all scripts should be disallowed by default. So that's the current situation right now.

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And then 2) exceptions may be made for some scripts, but only after careful consideration of potential confusability both within and across scripts. Such consideration should invite comments from the technical and linguistic community, and from ICANN's advisory committees."

So this basically seems like a precursor to what SubPro is recommending, to identify these potential scripts and languages that can serve as the candidate for single-character TLDs. And then what SSAC specifically recommends is that it should invite comments from the technical and linguistic community because they have the relevant expertise to identify these candidates.

And then 3) single-character TLD applications in an exceptionally allowed script should be accepted only when there is clear evidence that there is no risk of user confusion. Each applied-for single-character TLD label must be explicitly examined across scripts to ensure that there is absolutely no possibility for user confusion within or across scripts.

The third one is a more kind of emphasizing point in terms of risk of user confusion. And for these scripts, there should be no risk. And that's some criteria this EPP Team can consider.

And 4) ICANN should consult with the technical and linguistic community to determine which scripts, if any, should be restricted with respect to the delegation of single-character TLDs, and how any such restrictions should be defined, and how such restrictions may be relaxed if appropriate. of user confusion.

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I think this point is kind of similar to point #2, but specifically it's related to defining restrictions in consultation with the technical and linguistic community.

And 5) ICANN should take into consideration the outcome of the IETF work on the creation of a concise specification of the TLD label syntax based on existing syntax documentation, extended minimally to accommodate IDNs.

And that's another related work on IETF. I'm not sure how that relates to this work here, but perhaps it's a documentation this group can review in the future, too.

And then the sixth recommendation. I won't read every single one down below, but it's basically that ICANN should consider adopting some guidelines regarding its consideration of which scripts and code points should be accepted as exceptions. So the SSAC provided some of these guidelines. So, basically, this group can review them and see whether they're applicable in terms of developing a recommendation. So this is the SSAC recommendation which is quite extensive.

And then finally, there's this JIG Final Report on Single Character IDN TLDs. It's dated in 2011, so that's an old report. And after a staff review, what we find may be the most pertinent for this group to review is its Implementation Recommendation D on Single Character IDN TLDs.

"Requested single-character IDN TLD strings should be analyzed on a case-by-case basis in the new gTLD process depending on the script and language. Single-character IDN TLDs should be

acceptable, but must not be confusingly similar to single or two-character ASCII TLDs. For alphabetic script single-character IDN TLDs, other technical aspects of confusability may be taken into consideration, such as the likelihood of user slip with relevance to keyboard layouts.”

So just to summarize, I think this recommendation touched a point of confusable that’s already taken into consideration by the SubPro recommendation when they developed that recommendation related to single-character TLDs. But they also talk about analyzing on a case-by-case basis.

I think that’s sort of superseded or updated because the reason why we have A7 is to increase the efficiency in the future so those single-character TLDs do not need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If the script and language has already been identified previously and if allowable characters have already been specified, then it can be a more efficient process to check the delegation approval or these single-character TLDs rather than analyzing them on a case-by-case basis.

So this recommendation is slightly kind of outdated, per se, but it was developed more than 10 years ago. So it’s understandable.

So these are some of the documents and studies and recommendations that serve as the context of A7. And I understand that’s a lot of material to digest, but we have the slides on the Wiki. And the team members can review these materials offline as well before we dive into the detail. So I will stop here.

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DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Ariel. So as Ariel said, that's a lot of information to digest. And I think this is potentially a difficult question to consider and resolve, but I'm interested in whether folks have any initial thoughts on this or whether it's something they need some time to think about and we can come back to it.

Anil, go ahead.

ANIL KUMAN JAIN: Thank you, Donna. Is there any background material regarding the technical instability in case the single-level variant or TLD is selected? Just of information. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: I'm going to call on Sarmad to see if he has an answer to that. Or even Dennis. Dennis, did you want to respond to Anil's question?

DENNIS TAN: Yes. Quickly, all right? Just within the context. While we are talking about single-character U-labels, remember a U-label is a representation in Unicode. Whereas the DNS is only ASCII. And whenever you transform the U-label to an ASCII label which is parsed on the backend—on the wire—it, at minimum, has four letters (xn--) in the punycode algorithm there.

So really, on a DNS, purely technical, strictly speaking DNS, there is no impact. It's more on the user end where you don't want to introduce confusion and all the reasons that we have been exposed to.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Dennis. Hadia. If you're speaking, we can't hear you. Hadia?

DEVAN REED: Hi, Hadia. It looks like you're still muted in Zoom.

DONNA AUSTIN: Okay, so Hadia is reconnecting through the mobile. Any other thoughts on thoughts on what mechanisms or criteria should be used to identify the scripts/languages appropriate [for] single-character TLDs?

Dennis, go ahead.

DENNIS TAN: Thank you, Donna. Just to offer this idea. I have my bias because I have a Chinese and Japanese background. So I immediately go to Han script which, talking about ideograms or ideographs, that's the script that I would identify that would be suitable for single-character U-labels. But I'm not sure if there are any others when this question was raised. But maybe I need to go back to look at the studies and dig a little bit more.

But, yeah, maybe this is something that we need to outsource, perhaps, to identify these ideograms or ideograph scripts and languages. And then with that information, come back and assess what we can do about that. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Dennis. To the additional expertise, Sarmad, I don't know if this is something that you've spent a considerable amount of time thinking about or not at all.

And also, Edmon, if you're on the call and you have any thoughts on this, it would be helpful to hear them.

And Hadia, let's go to you and see if we can hear you this time.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Donna. I was also trying to think in the same line that Dennis was. The same line of thought. So currently, the people working to identify language scripts are mainly Generation Panels and Integration Panels who are formed from the community with expertise in technical matters as well as the language and the script.

And looking at what we have now, we have no Standing Committee or panel that includes language ... Or at least to my knowledge, we have no standing committees that include experts in scripts or languages. But we form those panels or those committees when we are actually trying to come up with the Label Generation Rules. So we don't have a mechanism that exists now.

So I think the solution, to my mind, is either use the existing Generation Panels and Integration Panels or formulate a new mechanism or committee or committees that are actually able to identify if the script actually can be used for single characters and then which characters can be used.

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So to me, we don't have an existing mechanism. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Hadia. Sarmad.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you, Donna. So a few points. First of all, from a technical point of view, Dennis already addressed that a single U-label would translate into more than three characters—four characters, sorry—in ASCII because it will start with “xn--” and then the remaining part if it's an Internationalized Domain Name.

So basically, as far as the TLD [a-level] format is concerned, it is obviously longer than not a single character. The Unicode representation could be a single character.

As far as the selection of scripts is concerned, of course Han script is the only ideographic scripts which is currently in the root zone which is being used by the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean proposals for the root zone LGR. So those, I guess, become relevant if you're looking at ideographic scripts.

But if you're looking only at the ideographic scripts, I think it may still be useful to go back to the Generation Panels and ask them to look at the characters that they've identified in the context of single-character TLD labels because that's not something they may have focused on yet. So that's something which this working group may want to consider as it moves forward. Thank you.



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DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Sarmad. So we're almost out of time. I think we're almost out of time, so I'm going to hand it over to Edmon for the last word here. And obviously, this is something that we're going to have to come back to. And as Dennis suggested, we might need some more expertise here to help us with this one.

Edmon, go ahead.

EDMON CHUNG: Thank you. I guess, just quickly. Not a lot to add. I think the original thinking about this issue all across the years is to best avoid situations whereby a single stroke of the keyboard would [inaudible] a particular TLD and therefore potential mistyping would create situations for typos and other security considerations.

So the reason for considering ideographs is such that, usually, it's not a single keyboard stroke to type in the TLD. But I think, personally, I'm not so much of concern. I mean, even if in the future there would be, say voice input, a single word would suffice to enter a particular TLD. It doesn't really make a difference.

But speaking about that, I think the key issue for ideograph consideration, if the group would look at it, is that for Han characters with especially Chinese, but it's also used for Japanese and Korean, one ideograph would represent a whole word which could be multiple ASCII characters if you translate, if you will, into the different languages. And therefore, that's the main consideration.

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And generally, Han is the only script left, ideographic, that would use this. But I don't necessarily think it should be exclusively to that. But those are usually the considerations that are brought up on this issue of single-character TLDs.

Hopefully, that's useful.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Edmon. And also, I wanted to note that Jerry has put into chat that some of the 2012 round TLDs are spellings of a single Han script. So that's useful information as well.

So, I'm sorry. We're three minutes over time, so we're going to have to call it. But obviously, how we unpack this question and respond to it probably needs a little bit more thought. But in the interim, if folks could read what Ariel put together as context, that might be helpful. And we'll see. Whether we come back to this question next week or whether we move on to something else is to be determined at this point.

So thanks, everybody. We got through another question reasonably well today. So that's great. And we will talk to you next week a day later. So we'll talk to you in eight days as opposed to seven days. Thanks, everybody.

DEVAN REED:

Thank you all for joining once again. The meeting is adjourned. I will end the recording and disconnect all remaining lines.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**