ccNSO Study Group on Country and Territory Names

Progress Report

June 2012

Introduction and Background

The treatment of country and territory names as Top Level Domains is a topic that has been discussed by the ccNSO, GAC, GNSO and the Board since the policy development process for the new gTLD was initiated.

At its meeting on 8 December 2010 the ccNSO Council resolved to establish a study group to provide the ccNSO Council, ccTLD community and other interested stakeholders, including the GAC and GNSO Council, an overview of the scope and issues associated with the use of Country and Territory names as TLD strings and the scope and impact of alternative action paths on IDN ccTLD and new gTLD processes.

For purposes of this study group, the term "Countries and Territories" is defined to include those countries, dependencies or other area of particular geopolitical interests that are listed on the 'International Standard ISO 3166-1, Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions – Part 1: Country Codes', or, in some exceptional cases, listed as reserved ISO 3166-1 code elements.

Purpose of Study Group
The study group's charter document identifies three areas of work:

To provide the ccNSO Council, ccTLD community, and other interested stakeholders, including the GAC and GNSO Council:

1. An overview of current and proposed policies, guidelines and procedures for allocation and delegation of strings currently used or proposed to be used as TLDs that are either associated with Countries and Territories (i.e., by inclusion on the ISO 3166-1 list) and/or are otherwise considered representations of the names of Countries and Territories.

2. A comprehensive overview of the types and categories of strings currently used or proposed to be used as TLDs that are either associated with Countries and Territories (i.e., by inclusion on the ISO 3166-1 list) and/or are otherwise considered representations of Country and Territory names.

3. A comprehensive overview of issues arising (or likely to arise) in connection with applying the current and proposed policies, guidelines and procedures for allocation to types and categories of strings currently used or proposed to be used as TLDs that are either associated with Countries and Territories (i.e., by inclusion on the ISO 3166-1 list) and/or are otherwise considered representations of Country and Territory names.

In summary, the Study Group is stocktaking current policy approaches, postulating the types and categories of strings that could be interpreted as country or territory representations and analysing what happens when policies are applied to the identified strings.

Study Group Activities
To date, the study group has:

1. Developed a workplan to conduct its study, including a high level schedule.

2. Summarised existing and proposed policies, guidelines and implementation rules regarding the use of representations of Country and Territory names as TLDs (new gTLD process, IDN fast track, IDN ccPDP). This will be included in the SG's final report.

3. Developed a typology of different categories of Country and Territory names

4. Developed a survey, in conjunction with UNESCO, that will gather data from national administrations and relevant bodies on the ways in which they represent their country and territory names. The survey is based on the typology.

5. Undertaken preliminary hypothetical analysis of the categories of Country and Territory names included in the UNESCO survey.

6. Liaised with and briefed relevant community stakeholders such as the GNSO Council, GAC, IDN ccPDP project teams and new gTLD project team.

Progress since Costa Rica
The Study Group met four times via teleconference.

While awaiting the presentation of empirical data from both the UNESCO-supported survey and new GTLD application "reveal", the group focussed upon Item 4, above – discussing the range of different representations of country and territory names and considering what would happen if current policy or procedural frameworks were applied to them.

This has given rise to a number of preliminary observations regarding circumstances where inconsistent results may occur if different ICANN policies or processes are applied to differing representations of a country's name. These observations will be tested as further examples and data is gathered.

Next Steps
In Prague, the SG will focus on the new gTLD applications list, comparing the strings against current policy frameworks and rules.

Between Prague and Toronto, the Group aims to undertake similar analysis of the data gathered from the UNESCO survey and commence development of its output reports.

The Study Group will report and consult with stakeholders at greater length in Toronto, when its work is further progressed.

The Group is due to report and provide recommendations to the ccNSO Council by the end of 2012. However, it should be noted that the intent behind this scheduling was to ensure reporting was complete before the second round of new gTLD applications. Given the very likely delay of Round 2, the group may resolve to apply to the Council to finalise its reporting at the first ICANN meeting in 2013, should this extension assist the SG in delivering a more comprehensive Final Report.

Paul Szyndler
Chair – Study Group on Country and Territory Names