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## **auDA comments on the Proposed Charter of ICANN's Geographic Regions Review Working Group**

**March 2009**

auDA welcomes the ICANN Board's November 2008 resolution authorising the formation of a community-wide working group to study and review issues related to the definition of ICANN's geographic regions.

auDA also welcomes and supports the draft charter established for the "Geographic Regions Working Group".

### **Background**

.au Domain Administration Ltd (auDA) is the not-for-profit organisation endorsed by the Australian Government to administer the .au domain space under an industry self-regulatory regime. auDA is a long-standing, active participant in ICANN's country code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO).

### **Comments**

The issue of geographic regions within ICANN has a long and complicated history and has become inexorably intertwined with the structure and operation of all of ICANN's Supporting Organisations and Advisory Committees.

Although the ICANN Geographical Regions were originally proposed as a mechanism for ensuring diversity on the ICANN Board, ICANN's Bylaws have since evolved to include references to geographical representation in relation to the structure and operation of the Nominating Committee, GNSO Council, ccNSO and ALAC. Independent of ICANN's Bylaws, the Address Supporting Organization maintains its own geographical segmentation. Even the GAC, which operates without formal geographical delineations, seeks geographical diversity in the make up of its executive group.

While supporting the principle of geographical diversity within ICANN, auDA recognises that ICANN's July 2000 resolution to adopt a regional structure - including a mechanism for determining "citizenship" for non-countries - has given rise to a number of representational and participation issues.

For example, the sheer size and diversity of ICANN's Asia-Australia-Pacific Region can create difficulties for meaningful participation in regional dialogues

for smaller and lesser-developed countries and resource-poor ccTLD managers.

Similarly, groups of countries with cultural, political and language affiliations may struggle for meaningful representation under purely geographic-based arrangements.

In addition, there is some inconsistency in the way in which geographical diversity requirements have been implemented throughout the ICANN structure and a fundamental divergence from the original United Nations Statistics Division list originally adopted by the ICANN Board.

Recognising that geographic regions play a fundamental role in the operation of all parts of ICANN, that current arrangements may not deliver maximum utility to all participants, and that any changes may have widespread impacts on ICANN's operation, auDA supports the proposed draft charter for the Geographic Regions Working Group. The charter appears to strike an appropriate balance between the need for a review of ICANN's geographic regions and the importance of undertaking this work through a broad, consensus-based approach.

It is particularly appropriate that, before developing any proposals for reform, the Working Group will:

- draw its membership from across ICANN's constituencies;
- operate in an open, consultative manner;
- identify the wide range of purposes for which ICANN's Regions are currently used; and
- assess whether the current ICANN Geographic Regions continue to meet the requirements of stakeholders.

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