

At Large Advisory Committee Comments on Redelegation of the .NET gTLD

Mar del Plata, 7 April 2005

The At Large Advisory Committee views with concern the progress of the .NET redelegation process. Our particular concern is that the interests of registrants and Internet users have not been given sufficient weight in the process to date.

The existing process has given little weight or has unreasonably evaluated several criteria of importance to the at-large community:

- *Assessment of past compliance of the applicants.* In particular, we (as well as many other parts of the community, according to the numerous public comments made to this merit throughout all the process) are troubled by Verisign's history of unilateral changes, notably their SiteFinder product, and their quick resort to lawsuits when differences arise with ICANN. We would hope that a registry would be rewarded for a smooth and cooperative relationship rather than the opposite. We note that no company would ever award a new contract to a supplier that has repeatedly tried to escape or bypass its contractual obligations, up to the point of suing its customer.
- *Diversity of network resources and facilities.* We believe that one of the great strengths of the Internet is the wide diversity of organizations and physical facilities that constitute its infrastructure. For this reason, given a choice of qualified candidates, the prudent course would be to maximize the diversity by selecting a candidate that does not already operate another gTLD registry. This course also maximizes the array of choices available to registrants.
- *Geographic diversity.* For many valid reasons, ICANN has gone to great effort to effect a transformation from its U.S. origins into an organization with global scope and representation. For this reason, given a choice of qualified candidates, ICANN should select one with facilities and ownership in countries that do not yet host gTLD registries.

We also believe that several criteria important to users need more emphasis:

- *Customer support.* Quality of support is key to users, particularly quality of support to non-English speakers. For example, a candidate should have multilingual staff to support their multilingual clientele.
- *WHOIS and privacy protection.* Many users are deeply concerned about the privacy of their WHOIS data. A registry should be prepared to provide the maximum privacy consistent with the laws of its home country.

Fortunately, the process to date has found that all five applicants are technically qualified to run the .net registry, with little difference even between the highest and lowest ranked. For this reason, we urge the ICANN board to declare the technical evaluation to be a tie, and to proceed to select the new .NET registry based on these important at-large and user criteria.