

ICANN Regions

In accordance with ICANN bylaws, a review of ICANN Regions will be conducted this year to determine whether any change to the current Geographic Regions: Europe; Asia/Australia/Pacific; Latin America/Caribbean Islands; Africa; and North America, is appropriate taking account of the evolution of the Internet.

Background

The five geographic regions adopted by ICANN evolved from the White Paper discussions.

At the Yokohama meeting in July 2000, the ICANN Board of Directors was required to determine the specific definition of the five geographic regions in connection with the ICANN At Large elections.

ICANN staff proposed the use of the February 2000 version of two lists prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, and also recommended (based on GAC comment) that dependent territories be grouped together with the country of citizenship for the territory. Thus, a resident of New Caledonia (overseas territory of France located in the Pacific Ocean) would be grouped with Europe rather than Asia/Australia/Pacific.

On 16 July 2000, the Board resolved to direct staff to assign countries to geographic regions on the basis of the United Nations Statistics Division's current classifications of "Countries or areas, codes and abbreviations" as revised 16 February 2000, and "composition of macro geographic (continental) regions and component geographical regions" as revised 16 February 2000.

At the meeting in Montreal 2003, the Board conducted a second review of ICANN's geographic regions. It was proposed that the basic definition of the Geographic Regions remain in effect, based on reference to the current versions of the United Nations Statistics Division documents.

On 26 June 2003, the Board reaffirmed the existing definition of five geographic regions and reaffirmed the existing methodology for allocating specific countries and territories to particular regions, pursuant to Article VI, Section 6 of the ICANN bylaws, and the allocation table posted by the staff on 5 June 2003 <http://www.icann.org/montreal/geo-regions-topic.htm>

In accordance with the ICANN bylaws, the geographic regions are to be reviewed again this year. In 2003, the regions were agreed by the Board at the same meeting in Montreal that the Board adopted amendments to the ICANN Bylaws to include the ccNSO. This will be the first opportunity for the ccNSO to comment on the regions.

Discussion

The scheduled review of ICANN's geographic regions will be the ccNSO's first opportunity to participate as the ccNSO did not exist at the time the previous two reviews were conducted.

The distribution of countries in the five ICANN regions is as follows:

Africa—54

Asia/Australia/Pacific—73

Europe—75

Latin American/Caribbean Islands—33

North America—8

This may be disproportional when considered in the context of representation on the ccNSO Council, which is currently 3 members from each region.

The Asia/Australia/Pacific region covers a vast landmass, approximately 10 timezones and a considerable number of cultures and languages. There are a number of Arab nations within this region who believe they should have their own region to ensure adequate representation in debate of issues.

The grouping of dependent territories with the country of citizenship may create confusion and also impacts on regional representation. For example, the Cayman Islands is identified as being in the Europe region, but is physically located in the Caribbean. If someone from there wanted to stand for election to the Council they would need to be nominated by someone from Europe.

Attachment A provides a breakdown of the Physical Region of a ccTLD, the region it has been designated to by ICANN, and the region it has been designated to by the United Nations Statistics Division.

Options

- Seek views from the ccTLD community about the current structure of ICANN's regions to determine the extent to which this is an issue within the community.
- Wait for ICANN to release an Issues Report on ICANN Regions for comment and provide a ccNSO response.
- ccNSO could set up its own regions to suit its specific needs.