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Trondheim, 22.01.2019

Comments from Norid to Work Track 5 on Geographic Names at the Top Level - Supplemental Initial Report of the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process

On behalf of Uninett Norid AS, the Norwegian ccTLD registry, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the abovementioned supplemental report and offer the following comments.

1. General comments

The rules applicable to geonames as TLDs in the Applicant Guidebook 2012 (AGB) generally worked well and struck the appropriate balance between the different interests at stake. This balance came about as the result of a long process with discussion between the different stakeholders. Although the treatment of geographical names in the AGB was different from the New Generic Top-Level Domains policy recommendations from 8 August 2007, the AGB has served the community well.

Even if there were some conflicts, and some of the rules there could be better, we think that if the 2007 policy had been implemented instead, we would not have avoided conflicts regarding geographical names. On the contrary, we would possibly have had more conflicts. Therefore, the rules of the AGB should be maintained, with a few clarifications.

2. Specific comments to the Preliminary Recommendations

Preliminary Recommendation #1: Supported without further comments.

Preliminary Recommendations ##2-9 (strings at the top level reserved as not available for delegation in the AGB): The exclusion of country names and variations thereof is consistent with the fact that such names are not “generic” names and should therefore not be applicable as gTLDs. If used at all, they should be under the policy authority of the respective national communities, in analogy to ccTLDs.

Preliminary Recommendation #2: Supported. All 2-character combinations, on ISO 3166-1 or not, should be reserved for ccTLDs.

ICANN is not in the position to decide what is a country and what is not. There have been and will be new countries in the future that will need a ccTLD. Therefore we strongly support that all 2-character combinations should be reserved for existing and future ccTLDs.

However, the proposal by Work Track 2 to remove the reservation of 1 letter/1 digit is in conflict with the principles that gTLDs should be 3-characters or more and will increase string confusion with the 2-letter country codes. We refer to our earlier comments on this proposal, and firmly recommend reserving **all 2-character combinations**.

Preliminary Recommendation #3: Supported. Alpha-3 codes in the ISO 3166-1 standard are of great importance for countries and are used widely as identification for the country. The reservation of these strings should be kept as in AGB 2012; unavailable for delegation at the top level.

Preliminary Recommendation #4: We support to continue to reserve long-form names (of countries and territories) in the ISO 3166-1 standard at the top level and unavailable for delegation.

Preliminary Recommendation #5: We support to continue to reserve short-form names (of countries and territories) in the ISO 3166-1 standard at the top level and unavailable for delegation.

Preliminary Recommendation #6: We support to continue to reserve short- or long-form name association with a code that has been designated as “exceptionally reserved” by the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency at the top level and unavailable for delegation.

Preliminary Recommendation #7: We support to continue to reserve separable component of a country name designated on the “Separable Country Names List” at the top level and unavailable for delegation.

Preliminary Recommendation #8: We support to continue to reserve permutation or transposition of any of the names included in Preliminary Recommendation #4 - #7 at the top level and unavailable for delegation. We also support the clarification on the Alpha-3 codes listed in ISO 3166-1 standard, where strings resulting from permutations and transpositions of those should be allowed, as they then will constitute general words.

Preliminary Recommendation #9: We support to continue to reserve names by which a country is commonly known as described at the top level and unavailable for delegation.

Preliminary Recommendations ##10-13 (strings requiring governmental support or non-objection in AGB): In general, we believe that the “support/non-objection” framework have worked well and should be maintained.

Preliminary Recommendation #10: We support that an application for a string that is a representation of the capital city name of any country or territory listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard at the top level should be accompanied by documentation of support or non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities. However, there should be put in place instruments that will make it easier for applicants to find the relevant government or public authority, for example through the GAC.

3. Questions on which the PDP WG is seeking feedback

We have comments to some of the questions, but some are not relevant for us and we have no experience to share. We will list them below with the numbering given in the report.

E6: Ideally country and territory names in all languages should be protected. As far as we know there have been no reports on problems with this from the 2012 round.

If limited at all, our suggestion is to at least reserve as unavailable translations in UN languages and the official languages of the country for long-form name in the ISO 3166-1 standard, short-form names listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard and separable component of a country names designated on the “Separable Country Names List”. In this way, we have a list to relate to. In addition, there should be in place a curative process, such as an objection procedure, for commonly used languages in the country in question.

E7: We believe that the process of delegating 3-letter codes and/or country and territory names to specific parties, such as relevant governments and public authorities or other entities, does not belong as part of the new gTLD Process at all.

In our view, the only recommendation that could be made is to suggest a change in Bylaws to establish a new category for these strings. They are not ccTLDs, as they are more than 2 letters, but they should not be gTLDs either, as they have a clear, and very strong connection with countries.

If these TLDs are to be used at all, their policies should be made according to the subsidiarity principle, under the policy authority of their national communities, similarly to ccTLDs. A process to study the possibilities here should be left for a later stage, after the new gTLD Policy for next round has been finished, and should take into account that the end result is a new category - instead of a gTLD.

With regards
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