

**TRADEMARK POST-DELEGATION DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE (TRADEMARK PDDRP)  
REVISED – MAY 2010**

**INTRODUCTION**

Several community participants, including the Implementation Recommendation Team (IRT) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) suggested that one of the rights protection mechanisms (RPM) for trademark holders should be a trademark post-delegation dispute resolution procedure (Trademark PDDRP). Various recommendations as to how such a process would be implemented have been discussed and analyzed. One point that seems to be generally accepted, is that such a procedure should only afford trademark holders the right to proceed against registry operators who have acted in bad faith, with the intent to profit from the systemic registration of infringing domain names (or systemic cybersquatting) or who have otherwise set out to use the gTLD for an improper purpose. The procedure is not intended to hold liable a registry operator that simply happens to have or knows of infringing domain names within its gTLD. Affirmative conduct is required.

It must be ensured that a post-delegation procedure challenging registry operator conduct does not confer third-party beneficiary rights upon non-signatories to the Registry Agreement. Further, questions have arisen as to the rights of bona fide registrants and registrars who are not a party to the post-delegation dispute resolution proceedings. Such concerns are understood and can be addressed through remedies for violations of trademark rights at the top level and at the second level.

It is important to note that this Trademark PDDRP is not intended to replace ICANN's contractual compliance responsibilities. ICANN will continue to pursue its contractual compliance activities and enforcement for all of its contracted parties. This Trademark PDDRP is meant to enhance such activities and provide ICANN with independent judgment it disputes between two parties as required.

At the top level, the rights of a trademark holder to proceed against a gTLD operator for trademark infringement exist separate and apart from any contract between ICANN and a registry operator. The Trademark PDDRP simply provides an efficient avenue in which to pursue rights that already exist.

Since the Nairobi meeting ICANN has held an open public participation process to discuss potential revisions to the PDDRP. The consultation has included a face-to-face meeting, two telephonic conferences and a robust exchange of ideas and suggestions via email. With suggestions from a variety of community representatives, this public participation process has been extremely productive. The results can be seen in the significant revisions to this version of the PDDRP. Although a great majority of suggestions have been adopted, albeit some in slightly revised form, not all suggested revisions have or could have been included in that some were directly at odds with each other or not implementable.

ICANN thanks all who have been instrumental in helping this public consultation process work.

## **DRAFT PROCEDURE**

### **1. Parties to the Dispute**

- The parties to the dispute will be the trademark holder and the gTLD registry operator. ICANN shall not be a party.

### **2. Applicable Rules**

- This procedure is intended to cover Trademark post-delegation dispute resolution proceedings generally. To the extent more than one Trademark PDDRP provider ("Provider") is selected to implement the Trademark PDDRP, each Provider may have additional rules that must be followed when filing a Complaint. The following are general procedures to be followed by all Providers.
- In the Registry Agreement, the registry operator agrees to participate in all post-delegation procedures and be bound by the resulting Determinations.

### **3. Language**

- The language of all submissions and proceedings under the procedure will be English.
- Parties may submit supporting evidence in their original language, provided and subject to the authority of the Expert Panel to determine otherwise, that such evidence is accompanied by an English translation of all relevant text.

### **4. Communications and Time Limits**

- All communications with the Provider must be submitted electronically.
- For the purpose of determining the date of commencement of a time limit, a notice or other communication will be deemed to have been received on the day that it is transmitted to the appropriate contact person designated by the parties.
- For the purpose of determining compliance with a time limit, a notice or other communication will be deemed to have been sent, made or transmitted on the day that it is dispatched (e.g., time stamped email or fax, postmark).
- For the purpose of calculating a period of time under this procedure, such period will begin to run on the day following the date of receipt of a notice or other communication.
- All references to day limits shall be considered as calendar days unless otherwise specified.

### **5. Standing**

- The mandatory administrative proceeding will commence when a third-party complainant ("Complainant") has filed a Complaint with a Provider asserting that the

Complainant is a trademark holder (which may include either registered or unregistered marks as defined below) claiming that one or more of its marks have been infringed, and thereby the Complainant has been harmed, by the registry operator's manner of operation or use of the gTLD.

Before proceeding to the merits of a dispute, and before the Respondent is required to submit a substantive Response, or pay any fees, the Provider shall appoint a special one-person Panel to perform an initial "threshold" review ("Threshold Review Panel").

## 6. Standards

- **Top Level:**

A complainant must assert and prove, by clear and convincing evidence, that

*the registry operator's affirmative conduct in its operation or use of its gTLD string that is identical or confusingly similar to the complainant's mark, causes or materially contributes to the gTLD doing one of the following:*

*(a) taking unfair advantage of the distinctive character or the reputation of the complainant's mark; or*

*(b) unjustifiably impairing the distinctive character or the reputation of the complainant's mark; or*

*(c) creating an impermissible likelihood of confusion with the complainant's mark.*

An example of infringement at the top-level is where a TLD string is identical to a trademark and then the registry operator holds itself out as the beneficiary of the mark.

- **Second Level**

Complainants are required to prove, by clear and convincing evidence that, through the registry operator's affirmative conduct:

*(a) there is a substantial pattern or practice of specific bad faith intent by the registry operator to profit from the sale of trademark infringing domain names; and*

*(b) the registry operator's bad faith intent to profit from the systematic registration of domain names within the gTLD that are identical or confusingly similar to the complainant's mark, which:*

*(i) takes unfair advantage of the distinctive character or the reputation of the complainant's mark; or*

*(ii) unjustifiably impairs the distinctive character or the reputation of the complainant's mark, or*

*(iii) creates an impermissible likelihood of confusion with the complainant's mark.*

In other words, it is not sufficient to show that the registry operator is on notice of possible trademark infringement through registrations in the gTLD. The registry operator is not liable under the PDDRP solely because: (i) infringing names are in its registry; or (ii) the registry operator knows that infringing names are in its registry; or (iii) the registry operator did not monitor the registrations within its registry.

A registry operator is not liable under the PDDRP for any domain name registration that: (i) is registered by a person or entity that is unaffiliated with the registry operator; (ii) is registered without the direct or indirect encouragement, inducement, initiation or direction of any person or entity affiliated with the registry operator; and (iii) provides no direct or indirect benefit to the registry operator other than the typical registration fee.

An example of infringement at the second level is where a registry operator has a pattern or practice of actively and systematically encouraging registrants to register second level domain names and to take unfair advantage of the trademark to the extent and degree that bad faith is apparent. Another example of infringement at the second level is where a registry operator has a pattern or practice of acting as the registrant or beneficial user of infringing registrations, to monetize and profit in bad faith.

## **7. Complaint**

- **Filing:**

The Complaint will be filed electronically. Once the Administrative Review has been completed and the Provider deems the Complaint be in compliance, the Provider will electronically serve the Complaint and serve a paper notice on the registry operator that is the subject of the Complaint (“Notice of Complaint”) consistent with the contact information listed in the Registry Agreement.

- **Content:**

- The name and contact information, including address, phone, and email address, of the Complainant, and, to the best of Complainant’s knowledge, the name and address of the current owner of the registration.
- The name and contact information, including address, phone, and email address of any person authorized to act on behalf of Complainant.
- A statement of the nature of the dispute, which should include:
  - The particular legal rights claim being asserted, the marks that form the basis for the dispute and a short and plain statement of the basis upon which the Complaint is being filed.

- A detailed explanation of how the Complainant’s claim meets the requirements for filing a claim pursuant to that particular ground or standard.
- A detailed explanation of the validity of the Complaint and why the Complainant is entitled to relief.
- A statement that the Complainant has at least 30 days prior to filing the Complaint notified the registry operator in writing of: (i) its specific concerns and specific conduct it believes is resulting in infringement of Complainant’s trademarks and (ii) its willingness to meet to resolve the issue.
- An explanation of how the mark is used by the Complainant (including the type of goods/services, period and territory of use – including all on-line usage) or otherwise protected by statute, treaty or has been validated by a court or the Clearinghouse.
- Copies of any documents that the Complainant considers to evidence its basis for relief, including web sites and domain name registrations.
- A statement that the proceedings are not being brought for any improper purpose.
- Complaints will be limited 5,000 words and 20 pages, excluding attachments, unless the Provider determines that additional material is necessary.
- At the same time the Complaint is filed, the Complainant will pay a non-refundable filing fee in the amount set in accordance with the applicable Provider rules. In the event that the filing fee is not paid within 10 days of the receipt of the Complaint by the Provider, the Complaint will be dismissed without prejudice.

## **8. Administrative Review of the Complaint**

- All Complaints will be reviewed by the Provider within five (5) business days of submission to the Provider to determine whether the Complaint contains all necessary information and complies with the procedural rules.
- If the Provider finds that the Complaint complies with procedural rules, the Complaint will be deemed filed, and the proceedings will continue to the Threshold Review. If the Provider finds that the Complaint does not comply with procedural rules, it will dismiss the Complaint and close the proceedings without prejudice to the Complainant’s submission of a new Complaint that complies with procedural rules. Filing fees will not be refunded.
- If deemed compliant, the Provider will electronically serve the Complaint on the registry operator and serve the Notice of Complaint consistent with the contact information listed in the Registry Agreement.

## 9. Threshold Review

- Provider shall establish a Threshold Review Panel for each proceeding within five (5) business days after completion of Administrative Review and the Complaint has been deemed compliant with procedural rules.
- The Threshold Review Panel shall be tasked with determining whether the Complainant satisfies the following criteria:
  1. The Complainant is a holder of a mark: (i) issued by a jurisdiction that conducts a substantive examination of trademark applications prior to registration; or (ii) that has been court- or Trademark Clearinghouse-validated; or (iii) that is protected by a statute or treaty currently in effect and that was in effect on or before 26 June 2008;
  2. The Complainant has asserted that it has been materially harmed as a result of trademark infringement;
  3. The Complainant has asserted facts with sufficient specificity that, if everything the Complainant asserted is true, states a claim under the Top Level Standards herein  
OR  
The Complainant has asserted facts with sufficient specificity that, if everything the Complainant asserted is true, states a claim under the Second Level Standards herein;
  4. The Complainant has asserted that: (i) at least 30 days prior to filing the Complaint the Complainant notified the registry operator in writing of its specific concerns and specific conduct it believes is resulting in infringement of Complainant's trademarks, and its willingness to meet to resolve the issue; (ii) whether the registry operator responded to the Complainant's notice of specific concerns; and (iii) if the registry operator did respond, that the Complainant attempted to engage in good faith discussions to resolve the issue prior to initiating the PDDRP.
- Within ten (10) business days of date Provider served Notice of Complaint, the registry operator shall have the opportunity, but is not required, to submit papers to support its position as to the Complainant's standing at the Threshold Review stage. If the registry operator chooses to file such papers, it must pay a filing fee.
- If the registry operator submits papers, the Complainant shall have ten (10) business days to submit an opposition.
- The Threshold Review Panel shall have ten (10) business days from due date of Complainant's opposition or the due date of the registry operator's papers if none were filed, to issue Threshold Determination.
- Provider shall electronically serve the Threshold Determination on all parties.

- If the Complainant has not satisfied the Threshold Review criteria, the Provider will dismiss the proceedings on the grounds that the Complainant lacks standing.
- If the Threshold Review Panel determines that the Complainant has standing and satisfied the criteria then the Provider will commence the proceedings on the merits

#### **10. Response to the Complaint**

- The registry operator will file a Response to each Complaint. The Response will be filed within forty-five (45) days of after the date of the Threshold Review Panel Declaration.
- The Response will comply with the rules for filing of a Complaint and will contain the name and contact information for the registry operator, as well as a point-by-point response to the statements made in the Complaint.
- The Response should be filed with the Provider and the Provider should serve it upon the Complainant in electronic form with a hard-copy notice that it has been served.
- Service of the Response will be deemed effective, and the time will start to run for a Reply, upon confirmation that the electronic Response and hard-copy notice of the Response was sent by the Provider to the addresses provided by the Complainant.
- Along with the Response, the registry operator will pay a filing fee in the amount set in accordance with the applicable Provider rules. In the event that the filing fee is not paid within ten (10) days of the receipt of the Response by the Provider, the Response will be deemed improper and not considered in the proceedings.
- If the registry operator believes the Complaint is without merit, it will affirmatively plead in its Response the specific grounds for the claim.

#### **11. Reply**

- The Complainant is permitted ten (10) days from Service of the Response to submit a Reply addressing the statements made in the Response showing why the Complaint is not “without merit.” A Reply may not introduce new facts or evidence into the record, but shall only be used to address statements made in the Response. Any new facts or evidence introduced in a Response shall be disregarded by the Expert Panel.
- Once the Complaint, Response and Reply (as necessary) are filed and served, a Panel will be appointed and provided with all submissions.

#### **12. Default**

- If the registry operator fails to respond to the Complaint, it will be deemed to be in default.
- Limited rights to set aside the finding of default will be established by the Provider, but in no event will they be permitted absent a showing of good cause to set aside the finding of default.

- The Provider shall provide notice of Default via email to the Complainant and registry operator.
- All Default cases shall proceed to Expert Determination on the merits.

#### **14. Expert Panel**

- The Provider shall establish an Expert Panel, which shall consist of one Expert Panel member selected by the Provider, unless any party requests a three-member Expert Panel.
- In the case where either party requests a three-member Expert Panel, each party (or each side of the dispute if a matter has been consolidated) shall select an Expert and the two selected Experts shall select the third Expert Panel member. Such selection shall be made pursuant to the Providers rules or procedures.
- Panelists must be independent of the parties to the post-delegation challenge. Each Provider will follow its adopted procedures for requiring such independence, including procedures for challenging and replacing a panelist for lack of independence.

#### **15. Costs**

- The Provider will estimate the costs for the proceedings that it administers under this procedure in accordance with the applicable Provider rules. Such costs will be estimated to cover the administrative fees of the Provider and for the Expert Panel, and are intended to be reasonable.
- The Complainant shall be required to pay the filing fee as set forth above in the "Complaint" section, and shall be required to submit the full amount of the Provider estimated administrative fees and the Expert Panel fees at the outset of the proceedings. Fifty percent of that full amount shall be in cash (or cash equivalent) to cover the Complainant's share of the proceedings and the other 50% shall be in either cash (or cash equivalent), or in bond, to cover the registry operator's share if the registry operator prevails.
- If the Panel declares the Complainant to be the prevailing party, the registry operator is required to reimburse Complainant for all Panel and Provider fees incurred. Failure to do shall be deemed a violation of the Trademark PDDRP and a breach of the Registry Agreement, subject to remedies available under the Agreement up to and including termination.
- If the Provider deems the registry operator to be the prevailing party, the Registry Operator shall be entitled to a refund of its filing fees.

#### **16. Discovery**

- Whether and to what extent discovery is allowed is at the discretion of the Panel, whether made on the Panel's own accord, or upon request from the Parties.



- If permitted, discovery will be limited to that for which each Party has a substantial need.
- In extraordinary circumstances, the Provider may appoint experts to be paid for by the Parties, request live or written witness testimony, or request limited exchange of documents.
- At the close of discovery, if permitted, the Parties will make a final evidentiary submission to the Expert Panel, the timing and sequence to be determined by the Provider in consultation with the Expert Panel.

**17. Hearings**

- Disputes under this Procedure will be resolved without a hearing unless either party requests a hearing or the Expert Panel determines on its own initiative that one is necessary.
- If a hearing is held, videoconferences or teleconferences should be used if at all possible. If not possible, then the Expert Panel will select a place for hearing if the Parties cannot agree.
- Hearings should last no more than one day, except in the most extraordinary circumstances.
- All dispute resolution proceedings will be conducted in English.

**18. Burden of Proof**

- The Complainant bears the burden of proving the allegations in the Complaint; the burden must be by clear and convincing evidence.

**19. Remedies**

- Since registrants of domain names registered in violation of the agreement restriction are not a party to the action, a recommended remedy cannot take the form of deleting, transferring or suspending registrations that were made in violation of the agreement restrictions.
- Recommended remedies will not include monetary damages or sanctions to be paid to any party other than fees awarded pursuant to section 15.
- The Panel may recommend a variety of graduated enforcement tools against the registry operator if it the Expert Panel determines that the registry operator is liable under this Trademark PDDRP, including:
  - Remedial measures for the registry to employ to ensure against allowing future infringing registrations, which may be in addition to what is required under the registry agreement, except that the remedial measures shall not:

- Require the Registry Operator to monitor registrations not related to the names at issue in the PDDRP proceeding; or
  - Direct actions by the registry operator that are contrary to those required under the Registry Agreement;
  - Suspension of accepting new domain name registrations in the gTLD until such time as the violation(s) identified in the Determination is(are) cured or a set period of time;
- OR, in extraordinary circumstances where the registry operator acted with malice,
- Providing for the termination of a Registry Agreement.
- In making its recommendation of the appropriate remedy, the Expert Panel will consider the ongoing harm to the Complainant.
  - The Expert Panel may also determine whether the Complaint was filed “without merit,” and, if so, award the appropriate sanctions on a graduated scale, including:
    - Temporary bans from filing Complaints;
    - Imposition of costs of registry operator, including reasonable attorney fees;
    - Permanent bans from filing Complaints after being banned temporarily.

## **20. The Expert Panel Determination**

- The Provider and the Expert Panel will make reasonable efforts to ensure that the Expert Determination is issued within 45 days of the appointment of the Expert Panel and absent good cause, in no event later than 60 days after the appointment of the Expert Panel.
- The Expert Panel will render a written Determination. The Expert Determination will state whether or not the Complaint is factually founded and provide the reasons for that Determination. The Expert Determination should be publicly available and searchable on the Provider’s web site.
- The Expert Determination may further include a recommendation of specific remedies. Costs and fees to the Provider, to the extent not already paid, will be paid within thirty (30) days of the Expert Panel’s Determination.
- The Expert Determination shall state which party is the prevailing party.
- While the Expert Determination that a registry operator is liable under the standards of the Trademark PDDRP shall be considered, ICANN will have the authority to impose the remedies, if any, that ICANN deems appropriate given the circumstances of each matter.

- If ICANN decides to implement a remedy for violation of the Trademark PDDRP, ICANN will wait ten (10) business days (as observed in the location of its principal office) after notifying the registry operator of its decision. ICANN will then implement the decision unless it has received from the registry operator during that ten (10) business-day period official documentation that the registry operator has either: (a) commenced a lawsuit against the Complainant in a court of competent jurisdiction challenging the Expert Determination of liability against the registry operator, or (b) challenged the remedy by initiating dispute resolution under the provisions of its Registry Agreement. If ICANN receives such documentation within the ten (10) business day period, it will not seek to implement its decision under the Trademark PDDRP until it receives: (i) evidence of a resolution between the Complainant and the registry operator; (ii) evidence that registry operator's lawsuit against Complainant has been dismissed or withdrawn; or (iii) a copy of an order from the dispute resolution provider selected pursuant to the Registry Agreement dismissing the dispute against ICANN whether by reason of agreement of the parties or upon determination of the merits.

#### **21. Appeal of Expert Determination**

- Either party shall have a right to seek a de novo appeal of the Expert Determination of liability based on the existing record within the URS proceeding for a reasonable fee to cover the costs of the appeal.
- The fees for an appeal shall be borne by the appellant. A limited right to introduce new admissible evidence that is material to the Determination will be allowed upon payment of an additional fee, provided the evidence clearly pre-dates the filing of the Complaint. The three-member Appeal Panel, to be selected by the Provider, may request, in its sole discretion, further statements or documents from either of the Parties.
- An appeal must be filed within 20 days after an Expert Determination is issued.
- The Providers rules and procedures for appeals shall apply.

#### **22. Challenge of a Remedy**

- The registry operator may challenge ICANN's imposition of a remedy imposed in furtherance of an Expert Determination that the registry operator is liable under the PDDRP, to the extent a challenge is warranted, by initiating dispute resolution under the provisions of its Registry Agreement.

#### **23. Availability of Court or Other Administrative Proceedings**

- The Trademark PDDRP is not intended as an exclusive procedure and does not preclude individuals from seeking remedies in courts of law, including, as applicable, review of an Expert Determination as to liability.

In those cases where a Party provides the Provider with documented proof that a Court action was instituted prior to the filing date of the Complaint in the post-delegation dispute proceeding, the Provider shall suspend or terminate the post-delegation dispute resolution proceeding.