
MONTREAL – ccNSO: IDN ccTLD policy review and next steps

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BART BOSWINKEL:

If you are interested, please come at the table as well. This is so weird. We're talking through that screen and you sitting in my back. I can't see anything, so if you're really interested in the topic, please sit at the main table. It will be easier. This is a kickoff meeting, nothing formal and anything else. So, if you have questions, etc. And this is not really about the topics. It's just to inform everybody work is ahead of us and nothing else. Thank you. Thank you very much. Can you check if anybody in the back has questions, etc.?

So, just to set the tone of the meeting, if you have questions on anything, just raise your hand. This is not even a formal working group. It is, I think, bird of feather type of meeting in terms of [inaudible]. Yeah. So, very lightweight and it will set just a tone for the future PDP.

Because there are a lot of people who haven't seen it, I'll just go through a presentation I did at Kobe and explain a bit why we're doing the stuff we do and what is the expected timeline? And what will be the scope of this new PDP? Shall I start? That's why I'm doing the presentation. There is no working group, no working group chair as well, so you do understand where this comes from. There we go.

So, just as a—and this was for the [CSC] meeting. This goes back, say, half a year to Kobe. It started with a discussion why should the ccNSO

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look at this topic again? Because there was the overall policy. There is the fast-track process, etc. So, there were a couple of things that needed to be addressed and I'll show.

One is—and that's been taken care of, as you will see but the starting point of the discussion was under the fast-track process, there was 61 ccTLDs in 42 countries already and they are not eligible at this stage to become a member of the ccNSO which is very strange and is part of the overall policy but the overall policy was with the ICANN Board since 2013 and everybody agreed they should not take a vote on it because of the evolution of the fast-track process. So, this needed to be resolved.

A second point—and this is more into the substance of it—there were known open issues into March 2019 with respect to the fast-track process around the overall selection of IDN ccTLD strings. First and foremost was the variant management. If you would look to the document [itself], the overall policy from 2013, there is a placeholder. At that time, when it was discussed and adopted by the ccTLD community, the ccNSO, there was a major discussion going on in different working groups with the root zone LGR rules, etc. Label Generation Rule. And it was clear at one point policy needed to be set but it was unclear how to do it. So, there is a placeholder in what is called ccPDP.

A second thing—and some of you were deeply involved in that—is under the fast-track rules, there was an evolution of what is the confusing similarity review. And if you would go back and compare the two

documents, it's very clear that was developed at the time, did not meet the way it was done under the fast track, so there needed to be a discussion around it, how to consolidate this one way or the other. And the second thing—and it's a more fundamental discussion as well—to what extent should we diverge from the rules on the new gTLD program, I would say now and future. And because there is a huge divergence, because of the evolution of the fast track between what is happening under the fast track process and what has been developed under the new gTLD Applicant Guidebook, etc., and how SubPro is moving. So, that's quite an area for discussion that needs to be resolved.

A third open item is the retirement of IDN ccTLDs. For those of you not familiar with the ccNSO and its work, there is currently what is called a retirement working group, or PDP on retirement and review mechanism, that's on the retirement of ccTLDs in general.

Their focus point is what will happen if a code is removed from the ISO 3166 list of country and territory names. They did not touch IDN ccTLDs because as soon as you start looking into the criteria of IDN ccTLDs and the string selection criteria, you will have some weird results.

For example, a significant name change of a name of a country—and this is in English or in French—may lead to a new code on the ccTLD in the ISO 3166 list. However, such a significant name change in the local language and script combination may not have the same impact. So, there is some discrepancy and the Retirement Working Group, as its called, does not feel qualified to deal with these specific issues, so they

pushed it back and the Council decided this should be part and parcel of future work relating to IDNs. So, that's why you see it here.

So, these were already known areas in 2019 and this is more the policy approach to the roadmap, what to do, is to get from the fast-track process and the overall IDN ccTLD policy proposals, etc., to a policy for selection of IDN ccTLD strings and an amended ccNSO Article 10 for the bylaws allowing IDN ccTLDs, if they want to, to become members of the ccTLD, effectively splitting the two. We'll get back to that later on. And it's also to get from an exclusive to an inclusive ccNSO and then one with two ... Let's say the fast-track process which status is a bit weird and complicated to probably, hopefully, [save a predictable and simple policy].

So, the roadmap itself, what does it entail? Requests of closure of PDP 2 and stop the evolution on the fast track. Starting with the last part, it is one of the things—and as you can see in this, I will touch a little bit, get more into details a little bit later on—is because at the evolution of the fast-track process, as a result of the various reviews, the PDP is constantly playing catch up with it and that's the policy itself. So, that's one reason for stopping the evolution.

The second reason is a resourcing matter. Probably people who are interested in IDN ccTLDs or IDNs in general are the same ones who are interested in the evolution of the fast-track process. So, once you've got these two tracks in parallel, you spread the resources very thinly. So, that's another reason for focusing on one of the processes and the most

natural one would be on the PDP itself because the intention was it should replace the fast track anyway.

So, the ccNSO Council requested closure of the PDP and stopped the evolution of the fast track in August 2019. Let me explain why they requested closure.

The status of the overall policy proposals was very unclear and it's not dealt with under the bylaws. The ccNSO has submitted the Board report in September 2013 but both the Board and the ccNSO agreed not to do anything because there was some changes needed to the fast track process and there was another review so the Board never got to a discussion and/or approval vote of the overall policy. So, the status was a bit in limbo. And there is nothing under the policy itself—or the [Annex A, the policy, sorry] the process, the policy development process, which deals with this kind of situation, once you want to retract it. So, the most natural way of doing is just mutually agree to stop the process further and it started with a letter from the ccNSO to the Board.

The second part is—and I go back to what I just illustrated—is try to do a bit of a gap analysis between the overall IDN ccPDP policy and the fast track process itself.

That gap analysis was completed in June. It started in, I would say, March—no, in April—and was completed in June 2019 with the adoption of a final report.

Based on these two and the preliminary review team, as it's called, came up with a recommendation to replace policy development

processes, ccPDP 2 with two actions. One is the bylaw change, do it separately. The other one is the ccPDP 4 which will be launched shortly. And I'll go into a little bit more details about that as well.

So, preliminary findings of the gap analysis—and this is a summary. So, no major updates. And what they've done—let me explain the principle or the methodology they use—is they compared the several sections of the overall policy with what has been developed under the fast-track process and checked where there was major discrepancies and/or if there are issues which have not been addressed under the overall policy, like the retirement.

Based on this—and I'll summarize the findings. No major updates in several sections on inclusion—or section on the inclusion of IDN ccTLDs. Need to develop policy around retirement of IDN ccTLD and variant management. So, there is no policy in place on that. That needs to be developed. And some parts of the overall policy need to be updated and specifically around the process per [inaudible] procedures. And in the future, PDPs, if some of you were involved in the development of the fast-track process and the overall policy, it is a bit principle driven which is very relevant to interpret the policy when it's implemented but also in future use and these principles should be reconfirmed. So, that was in June.

Next step—and this is on the fast track itself. That was the Board has responded by a letter in the 31st of October, 2019. So, the ccPDP is now formally closed and the ccNSO Council has taken the decision to prepare and formally request policy on issue report at its next meeting.

That's mid-December. I'll go into that. So, this is what will happen next with respect to the IDN ccTLD strings.

Request an issue report, appointment of the issue manager and its entity of timeline. And this will be fairly compressed, I hope, given that there is a lot of documentation. The gaps are very clear and what is probably very important around the timeline is try to find, figure out a way how this working group, together with interested parties, can focus on specific areas.

For example, variant management is something that needs—say, the ccNSO and GNSO were requested to work together, I could imagine there would be a sub working group dealing with this and there will be an exchange of liaisons between what is happening on the ccNSO PDP and in the work area of the GNSO to at least, at a minimum, keep each other informed and, if feasible, try to come up the same type of, kind of solution or policy requirement. So you will not see as little divergence as feasible or have something that everybody agrees there is disagreement and that is documented which is also [inaudible] but at least everybody knows and there are no surprises.

The same is true with respect to confusing similarity. If you would look at the details, what is included right now in the fast track process, it starts with, I would say, a small committee looking at potential confusability of the strings, then there is a kind of second review possibility with the EPSRP, or Extended Process Similarity Review Panel which is using a different methodology and, say, if necessary at the end, there is also the feasibility of a risk mitigation discussion. It's a very

extended, and probably very costly, process and procedure which needs more streamlining.

At the same time, if you go back to how it was designed under the fast-track process initially, that became obvious from the first review there were a few flaws. But this is a moment to go back and take into account, say, the results to date and redesign the process to make it more future proof.

Say the other areas, for example, if you would look at the fast-track process—and I think even in the overall process—the references to the [inaudible] etc. is outdated, need to be checked, and need to be updated as well to make it, again, as future proof as feasible or include some work on, say, some language on how to update it. So, that's with respect to this proposed action item. Today, we have this. That will be part and parcel of the issue report.

The way it will be organized, inclusion IDN ccTLDs. That's from yesterday. Can you go to the ...? So, this is all ... Unless you're interested, that was all about the inclusion of IDN ccTLDs in the ccNSO but I think two areas that were effectively limiting it. One is a very formal one,. The definition in the ICANN bylaws prohibits IDN ccTLDs to become members, and once they are members, you have the issue of the balance of power within the ccNSO itself. And there was a bit of a discussion yesterday and it was a very extensive discussion at the time on the policy development process, how to deal with it.

But the leading principles were at least the ccTLDs present yesterday committed to is, I would say, one vote per country/territory because

that's how it's now divided with ASCII ccTLDs and that fabric should not change so in order to avoid [inaudible] by one country or territory in case you have multiple IDN ccTLDs in one country or territory. And this is not ...

For example, to illustrate this, the PDP can be launched—a request for a PDP can be launched if ten ccTLD managers [inaudible] report. If you would look at, for example, to the number of IDN ccTLDs for India, that's eleven. So, one country and then all run by the same entity. So, effectively, one entity could launch an issue and request an issue report for whatever they want within the scope of the ccNSO. So, you want to avoid this at least as much as possible.

Okay, let me go a little bit more into [inaudible]. This is more detailed on the request for the issue report, ICANN bylaws, etc., what they require and some more details. One of the elements is the appointment of an oversight committee at the early stages and that's, again, a voluntary arrangement under the bylaws. At least one councilor from one ccNSO region, from each of the regions, is invited to participate in order to embed the policy development process as much as possible within the ccNSO and that's the initial phase. And once we hope that, say, the decisions will be ready by, as I said, December of this year and that the issue report itself, because of the work of the preliminary review team, etc., will be available somewhere in February and [inaudible] so the working group can really kick off and start its work and focus on the areas of discussion at the Cancun meeting in March.

That was my introduction to the IDN ccTLD PDP, upcoming number four. Any questions, comments?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

Thank you, Bart. It's very comprehensive. About the [visual similarity], you said that the coordination between GNSO and the ccNSO is not real [inaudible] at least. So, as to the [visual similarity] coordination among the both SOs on coordination of [illusion itself], what is [visual similarity] process itself?

And the timeline because next round gTLD will be coming [inaudible]. So, both will be discussing the coordination.

BART BOSWINKEL:

Yeah. Put it this way. That's the tentative timeline and I hope this will be not the usual ccNSO PDP which may linger on, linger on, linger on and that was the important work, say we build on existing material already. We need to pay a little bit of catch-up with, say, the work of the GNSO. But at the same time, because you can split ... You know the issue space, so you can focus early on on that area.

But, ultimately, you're right in that sense, I think. The ccNSO PDP will have its own momentum, its own pace, and the ultimate solution that will take it's own time and its own course and we do not have something like EPDP. Go ahead.

EDMON CHUNG:

We are trying to get to an EPDP maybe. I'm not sure ... Not really speaking for the GNSO but I think right now we're not sure whether you guys—a cc is actually ahead because the PDP is already teed up and all that.

I think, currently—at least currently, just on that topic, currently the SubPro, the subsequent procedures working group, has looked at IDN in general and also the confusingly similar, visually similar, those issues in general.

However, I think a new group, at least a new initiative, whether it will be a new part of the SubPro or a completely new PDP is still being discussed right now but one that will focus on IDNs as it has developed, especially with the label generation rule sets, the IDN variant TLD items. So, we expect that to be a separate group—well, at least a new group whether it's on the SubPro or otherwise—to be formed.

And I think one of the things that is important that you mentioned is the coordination between the two. I think, as much as possible, both on the visual similar issue and on perhaps other pertinent issues on how we deal with – especially IDN variant TLDs – is going to be useful to be better coordinated. As much as possible, they should be at least similar because I think for end users, they wouldn't distinguish so much between an IDN gTLD versus an IDN ccTLD and the expectations would be similar, and therefore I think it would be prudent for the GNSO and ccNSO to, as best as possible, keep some of—at least the concepts consistent, understanding that down the path, the actual policies and especially on the implementation would certainly diverge.

BART BOSWINKEL:

I think you mean the same thing as I said. It's more of building it, say, you need to find a way how to organize it properly and I think that is what we will try to do over the next two or three months leading up to Cancun, so you [got the] organization so no surprises down the road. And we want to avoid, say, something—and that's why we didn't use the term cross-community working group because that has its own baggage.

we tried it with, say, country and territory names but people were unclear how it worked. So, we need to find another organization or principle, and the way I'm thinking about it, create a subgroup under the ccNSO PDP which is specifically focused on variant management and invite people on the GNSO side. And I see members from, say, the technical community who are interested as well to sit on those. They are probably not very interested in how some of the other procedures are evolving. If that group could come up with a—

As I said, agree to disagree, or at least—and preferably not too strong—or come up with a single solution which may be implemented differently but that's something. And they feed into both policy processes. That would be my preferred way of doing it or that is what I will suggest.

EDMON CHUNG:

Just thinking out loud, here. Do you envision the possibility of a joint subgroup in some form or is it a ... Because I'm thinking ahead for GNSO.

We would probably like to have something like that within the future work as well to be somewhat dedicated on, for example, IDN variant management but to keep a very close relationship with the discussion at the ccNSO.

I'm just not ... I haven't really thought through it yet because we haven't gotten to that point yet but just wondering what your thoughts are at this point.

BART BOSWINKEL:

What I think is probably you will have a very close tie-in if you look at the members individually, say the people in this room and the people in the community who are really interested in policy work related to variant management or confusing similarity are very limited.

So, whether you make it one working group or two working groups, at the end of the day, you will see the same people. The only thing what you want to do is a bit of a formal coordination which can be as light as possible between the work on the GNSO and ccNSO. But they need to be open.

So, I think the real strength will be in getting the people on both groups and that's where the real work and coordination is. You don't want to use it this way. You don't want to invent the wheel twice. Everything like this.

And the more procedures you put in place, the more difficult it will be. This group should focus on the work and not on procedures, these smaller groups.

Any other comments, questions, at this stage?

So, this was, as I said in the invite or what we put on the ... This was an introduction to the work. I don't have very much substantive work to do but we wanted to do this to put it on your agenda and make clear what the scope was and what you can expect between now and Cancun and that we in Cancun hope to have the first group in at work [inaudible]. Go ahead, Sarmad.

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Thank you. Just to let you all know that there's one more piece of this puzzle which is still in the pipeline. There was recently some work done by the community on developing recommendations on technical utilization of root zone LGR again towards the same goal to help facilitate the process of using root zone LGR consistently across multiple policy threads, one in GNSO and one in ccNSO. That has been published and is currently in front of the Board for consideration. And if the Board agrees, those recommendations may also be passed to the ccNSO and GNSO for further consideration.

BART BOSWINKEL:

Just to be clear for, say ... Some of it is because I don't have a technical background. What does this entail? What does it mean, what you just said? The recommendations, put it the other ways around. Are they focused at the use and, say, of top-level domains or below.

EDMON CHUNG: Not sure if I will help or hurt, confuse more. Is this focused on how these root zone LGR could be used by ICANN more on a technical level. However, I think this document, at least on the GNSO side, would definitely be one of the documents identified as input into the work. So, I would guess that probably that in the issues report for ccPDP it would reference this particular document as well. That would be how I envision it.

BART BOSWINKEL: I think one of the ... I don't know how it works within the GNSO, but in that sense—and I think that's where a real further discussion is needed between the GNSO and the ccNSO is the scope of the policy for the ccNSO is very, very limited. And how things go down, say, propagate itself through the DNS itself ... The ccNSO scope is very limited with that respect. They leave it up to IDN ccTLDs. And that could be a bit of an issue. That's why I was asking about the different [levels].

EDMON CHUNG: Right. So, this pertains specifically to the top-level domains.

BART BOSWINKEL: Then of course it's important. Yeah. Any other comments, questions?

[YIN MAY]: Hi, this is [Yin May] from [inaudible] root zone LGR. So, my question is when we think about ccTLD and if our country wants to registrar one or maybe they want just gTLD, then how is the timeline? How is the process? Is it treated differently or the timeline [inaudible] to get one?

BART BOSWINKEL: It's for the gTLD and ccTLD, two different policies, two different sets of requirements, etc. And the processes are different so you can't compare the two, one with the other. If you want to ... If your country would want an IDN ccTLD at this stage, talk to Sarmad. He can really assist you with how that works. So there is already a policy in place. Or not a policy. There is a method in place. It's the IDN ccTLD fast-track process. And that remains open and is still valid throughout development. So, maybe I should [inaudible] before. It doesn't close.

[YIN MAY]: Thank you.

BART BOSWINKEL: Any other questions, comments, etc.? If not, thank you [in the back]. I thank you very much for attending. More than expected. That's a good thing. I'll leave you back a lot of time.

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