

# Raising Fundamental Questions and Confirming General Principles

## *Cross-Community Geographic Regions Review Working Group Public Workshop*

**ICANN No. 39 - Cartagena, Columbia  
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1. Understanding the historical underpinnings and evolution of ICANN's Geographic Regions Framework as outlined in the Interim Report of the community-wide Geographic Regions Review Working Group prompts several fundamental questions – Has the Framework produce its desired effect?; Are the five regions still relevant, reasonable and defensible in the year 2010?; Are they, in fact, consistent with the international norms of today?
2. **The purpose of this session is to examine community reaction to a number of these questions and concepts. The questions set forth below have been pulled directly from Section B the Working Group's Interim Report published on 12 November 2010 - <http://www.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-12nov10-en.htm>. We look forward to an active community dialogue in Cartagena and in the community Public Forum - ( <http://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/public-comment-201101-en.htm#geo-regions-interim-report>) - open until 30 January 2011.**
3. *Does the primary use of Geographic Regions currently produce the desired broad international representation on the ICANN Board that reflects the make-up of the Internet constituency? If so, is it likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future?*
4. The Working Group was unable to locate anything in the public record that explains how the Regions themselves were selected. Both the Green and White Papers suggested that representatives of APNIC, ARIN and RIPE should be on the ICANN Board. It is therefore possible that the primary operating areas of these three RIRs were selected as the first three Regions (i.e. Asia/Australia/Pacific, North America and Europe respectively) with Latin America/Caribbean and Africa being seen as the next likely RIRs to be established. It may be that the adoption of these Regions, based upon the RIRs, was meant to provide the “functional diversity” required by the Bylaws.
5. Whatever the reason for initial (and still current) definition of ICANN

Geographic Regions (i.e. Africa; North America; Latin America/Caribbean; Asia/Australia/Pacific; and Europe), it was not the adoption of any commonly recognised division of the world such as “continents”<sup>1</sup>, nor of the definition used by any other organisation that the Working Group has been able to identify. These Regions are unique to ICANN.

6. ***Given the unique nature of the five ICANN Regions, was their original adoption reasonable and defensible? Are they still relevant and reasonable today?***
7. When first allocating countries to Geographic Regions in 2000, the ICANN Board expressed the view that it would be far better to adopt an authoritative, independent allocation rather than to attempt to make its own determination as it was not qualified to do so. Staff identified the UN Statistics Division’s “Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings” as a suitable list. It should be noted that the Working Group has so far been unable to identify any alternative, authoritative allocation of all countries of the world to regions.
8. Unfortunately, the pre-defined ICANN Regions do not match the regions in UN Statistic’s table. In addition, ICANN did not like the way that the UN allocated territories that are not autonomous countries. As a result of changes made to accommodate these two problems, 40% of countries are in a different ICANN Region from the one allocated by UN Statistics.
9. ***Is ICANN using an authoritative, independent list to allocate countries to its Regions, or has it created its own list? If it has created its own list, are the allocations still relevant, reasonable and defensible? Are ICANN’s current Geographical Regions consistent with international norms? Are there other structures equally or more consistent with international norms?***
10. The GAC advised the ICANN Board that when allocating countries to regions “ICANN should make reference to existing international norms for regional distribution of countries.” It has been generally assumed that the intent was to recommend that ICANN adopt an authoritative, independent allocation of countries to regions that was internationally accepted. As we have noted above, the only internationally accepted list that the WG can identify is the one produced by the UN Statistics Division. It has been created only to assist with economic and statistical reporting. It is not used by any international body to define its organizational structure or electoral constituencies. Indeed, within the United Nations and its subordinate organizations there are many different regional structures.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continent#Number\\_of\\_continents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continent#Number_of_continents)

11. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) uses:
  - Africa,
  - the Arab States,
  - Asia and the Pacific,
  - Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and
  - Latin America and the Caribbean.
  
12. The UN Economic and Social Council uses:
  - Africa,
  - Europe,
  - Latin America & the Caribbean,
  - Asia & the Pacific, and
  - Western Asia.
  
13. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has adopted different regional structures for different parts of its organization;
  
14. The ITU Council uses:
  - America,
  - Western Europe,
  - Eastern Europe and Northern Asia,
  - Africa, and
  - Asia and Australia.
  
15. The ITU Telecommunications Development Bureau (BDT) uses:
  - Africa,
  - Asia & the Pacific,
  - Arab States,
  - Europe,
  - the Americas, and
  - the Commonwealth of Independent States.
  
16. The ITU Telecommunications Bureau (BR) uses:
  - Africa
  - Americas
  - Asia
  - Europe and
  - Others

17. Finally, the ITU Radiocommunications Bureau (BR) divides the world into Zones 1 (Europe and Africa), 2 (The Americas) and 3 (Australasia).
18. In addition, within such UN organizations, it is common practice for countries to form ad hoc groups to deal with matters of mutual interest. These may be formal and long term, such as the Nonaligned Nations or the Commonwealth of Nations. Others are informal and short term to deal with a particular issue and terminating as soon as it is resolved.
19. ***Do the present ICANN Geographic Regions, and their use, enhance or detract from ICANN goal of reflecting the functional, geographic, and cultural diversity of the Internet at all levels of policy development and decision-making? What changes, if any, could be made to better reflect the cultural diversity of the Internet?***
20. In 2002, ICANN added its Core Values to its Bylaws and these included the concept of “cultural diversity” in addition to “geographic diversity”, however it is not clear that any specific changes were made to existing procedures to ensure the implementation of this new requirement. In particular, no changes were made to the definitions of Geographic Regions, the allocation of countries to those regions, or uses to which they were put. It is arguable that in some cases, particularly the allocation of territories to the region of their parent country, they detract from rather than enhance cultural diversity.
21. ***Would ICANN operations benefit from a re-allocation of Geographic Regions? If such a reallocation took place what frameworks should be considered - the current RIR system or some other modification to the existing system? How would such changes affect existing SO and/or AC operations?***
22. ***Rather than a single organizational model, would different SO-AC communities benefit if they were permitted to employ their own geographic diversity methodologies tailored to the specific needs of their own communities – with some oversight or review by the Board to assure adherence to the bylaws principles?***
23. ***How would any of these potential changes impact individual SO-AC operations? Would there be impacts to the ICANN budget or staffing resources?***
24. ***What impacts, if any could the recent Affirmation of Commitments have on ICANN’s Geographic Regions Framework?<sup>2</sup>***
25. These types of questions are critical to any future recommendations that might

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.icann.org/en/reviews/affirmation/responsibilities/>

be made by the Working Group in its Final Report. Further community comments or observation prompted by these questions are most welcome.