

December 10, 2014

Dear GNSO Stakeholder Group/Constituency Chair:

We write as the Co-Chairs of the GNSO's IGO-INGO Access to Curative Rights Protections (CRP) Working Group (WG), which was chartered by the GNSO Council to conduct a Policy Development Process (PDP) to determine:

(1) Whether the Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP) and/or the Uniform Rapid Suspension procedure (URS) should be amended, and if so, how; or

(2) Whether a separate, narrowly-tailored dispute resolution procedure modeled on the UDRP and/or the URS should be developed, in either case to address the specific needs and concerns of International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and/or International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs).

The WG commenced its work in August 2014. The GNSO's PDP Manual mandates that each PDP WG reach out at an early stage to all GNSO Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies to seek their input. Given the progress and decisions made by our WG, we are now writing to update you on our activities to date, and to provide your group with an opportunity to assist the WG with its assigned task, in respect of the following questions and issues that stem from our Charter and the initial deliberations of the WG.

First, we wish to inform you that the WG has reached a majority decision that there is no principled reason to consider INGOs in general as a special category of protected organizations, for purposes of the specific tasks for which the WG was chartered in this PDP. The rationale for this decision is provided in Attachment A.¹

Question 1: What is the view of your Stakeholder Group/Constituency on the WG's decision to exclude INGOs from further consideration in this PDP?

Second, the WG has considered most of the background information available to it, including the documentation from the 2001-2 WIPO Process-2 and the previous scoping work done by the ICANN community (including the GNSO) in 2004 and 2007. It has also reviewed the various expressions of GAC advice concerning the issue of curative rights protection for IGOs, as expressed in several GAC Communiques.

¹ This determination is made with due recognition of the special protections afforded to the Red Cross movement and International Olympic Committee. Although the International Olympic Committee and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have access to and have used the existing Rights Protection Mechanisms, they have been afforded special protection by ICANN to reduce their reliance on these RPMs due to the volume of cybersquatting on the desirable names of these beneficent organizations, which compounded their cost and burden of using these RPMs. *See* <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/reserved-2013-07-08-en/>. The Working Group understands this, and its statement regarding INGOs in general should be interpreted consistently with this special protection.

At this point, the WG would appreciate input from your Stakeholder Group/Constituency on the following questions that it will need to answer in the course of this PDP:

- One of the requirements under the UDRP and the URS is that the complainant must possess trademark or substantively similar rights in the word(s) for which the respondent has registered an identical or confusingly similar domain name (this is sometimes commonly called the “standing” requirement). The WG is still investigating the ability and practice of IGOs obtaining trademarks in their names and acronyms.

Question 2: What should be the basis (if any) – other than trademark rights – for the “standing” criteria required in any dispute resolution process for IGOs?

- A specific issue involving IGOs is the requirement for the organization, both as a domain registrant, and as a complainant under the UDRP and the URS, to agree to submit to the jurisdiction of a national court for purposes of an appeal. This may be problematic for IGOs due to possible issues with sovereign immunity. The WG is currently analyzing the sovereign immunity issue and is conducting research on how various nations have chosen to implement Paris Convention Article 6ter protections within their jurisdictions.

Question 3: How should a curative rights process appropriately deal with this problem while also ensuring adequate due process protections for registrants?

- The GAC has advised that any dispute resolution process relating to IGOs should be at no or nominal cost to the IGOs. The WG has noted that the fees and associated legal costs for the UDRP and the URS are substantially less than for litigation involving the same matters. Although the WG’s charter tasks it to analyze the issue of costs, the WG does not have the ability to create any fund or other subsidy mechanisms for IGOs who claim an inability to shoulder the costs of existing dispute resolution mechanisms.

Question 4: What is your Stakeholder Group/Constituency view on this issue, and in your view are the existing UDRP and URS fees “nominal”?

In addition to the above questions, the WG Charter, which can be found at <http://gnso.icann.org/en/drafts/igo-ingo-crp-access-charter-24jun14-en.pdf>, requires the WG to discuss a number of other issues. We would welcome your Stakeholder Group/Constituency feedback on any or all of these Charter questions.

In particular, we would welcome input on the following topics:

- Whether the URS should be a Consensus Policy;

- Considerations of applying policies formulated by this WG to both “legacy” gTLDs and the new gTLDs currently being delegated in this expansion round. (Note: This may potentially include the URS, which is currently mandatory only for gTLDs delegated under ICANN’s New gTLD Program. The WG also notes that the GNSO is scheduled to examine the issue of the efficacy of all rights protection mechanisms (RPMs) in both the legacy and new gTLDs in an upcoming Issue Report in early 2015);
- Whether the UDRP or the URS, or both, should be amended to address the particular needs and concerns of IGOs; and, if so, how;
- If the UDRP and/or the URS are not to be amended, whether a specific, narrowly-tailored dispute resolution procedure designed to address the particular needs and concerns of IGOs should be developed.

Thank you for your Stakeholder Group/Constituency’s consideration of these questions. We look forward to any comments and any input that you and the group you Chair are able to provide to our WG. If possible, please forward your comments and input to us by **Friday, January 23 2015** so that we may fully consider it in our further deliberations.

Best regards,

Philip Corwin & Petter Rindforth (WG Co-Chairs)

Attachment A

Rationale for the Working Group’s Decision to Exclude International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) from Further Consideration in our Deliberations

The WG has made an initial determination to exclude INGOs from further consideration for special curative rights protection procedures aside from the existing and un-amended UDRP and URS for the following reasons:

- Many INGOs already have, and do enforce their trademark rights, and there is no perceivable barrier to other INGOs obtaining trademark rights in their names and/or acronyms and subsequently utilizing those rights as the basis for

standing in the existing dispute resolution procedures (DRPs) created and offered by ICANN as a faster and lower cost alternative to litigation.

- There is no claim of a “sovereign immunity” obstacle hindering INGOs from submitting to national jurisdiction in the appeals process from the existing DRPs, and some INGOs regularly use the UDRP to protect their rights.
- Given the above determinations regarding access to trademark rights and irrelevance of the sovereign immunity issue, the WG believes that there is no principled reason to consider any amendment of the UDRP or the URS to accommodate INGOs.
- Although some INGOs may be concerned about the cost of using the UDRP and the URS, because enforcement through these RPMs involves some expenditure of funds, this is not a problem for all INGOs nor is it unique to INGOs as rights holders; furthermore, the issue of ICANN subsidizing INGOs to utilize DRPs is outside the scope of this WG’s Charter and its authority.
- The September 1, 2013 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) list of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with it consists of nearly 4,000 organizations, of which 147 organizations were in general consultative status, 2,774 in special consultative status, and 979 on the Roster. The WG also became aware that there might be many more organizations not presently on the ECOSOC list who might claim the right to utilize any new curative rights process (CRP) created for INGOs. The WG felt that the sheer scale of INGOs, in combination with the factors cited above, weighed against creation of a special DRP.
- While this is the “IGO-INGO Access to Curative Rights Protection Working Group”, its Charter (available at <http://gns0.icann.org/en/drafts/igo-ingo-crp-access-charter-24jun14-en.pdf>) does not require it to develop a CRP mechanism responsive to any special legal status for all INGOs. Rather, the Charter only requires it to consider “*The relevance of specific legal protections under international legal instruments and various national laws for IGOs and certain INGOs (namely, the Red Cross movement and the International Olympic Committee)*” (Emphasis added). The Charter also requires that this WG consider “The distinctions (if any) between IGOs and INGOs for purposes of this PDP”. The WG has considered those distinctions and determined that they are sufficient such that a specially-tailored DRP for INGO’s generally is not warranted, and that the WG should focus its remaining time and attention on the complex issues relating to protections for IGOs.

The determination to suspend further consideration of INGO access to DRPs takes into consideration the special protections afforded to the Red Cross movement and the International Olympic Committee. The WG noted that although these INGOs are specifically highlighted by the GAC and the Charter provision cited above as enjoying international legal treaty protections and rights under multiple national laws, for the purposes of this PDP they have demonstrated that: (1) they have access to the UDRP and the URS; and (2) they possess trademark rights that they defend and enforce. As such, for the limited purpose of considering access of INGOs to curative rights protections, the WG

determined there was no principled reason to distinguish them from other INGOs. The WG noted that legal representatives of the International Olympic Committee are active in the WG and fully support this conclusion.

The determinations cited above represent a strong majority position among all participating members of the WG. A minority view was expressed based on the viewpoint that the case for considering creation of a special DRP even for IGOs was too weak to justify further WG time and effort. That minority view did not prevail and the WG will continue to consider whether any special needs or considerations relating to IGOs justify amendment of the UDRP and the URS or, in the alternative, provide a rationale for creation of a DRP solely for use by IGOs.