

Issues to explore and define with respect to the retirement of ccTLDs

Introduction & Background

To date, only a limited number of ccTLDs have been undelegated. The majority of these cases are recorded in the Delegation Redelegation working group (DRDWG) final report on the retirement of ccTLDs¹. Since publication of this report in 2011 only one more case of retirement has occurred².

The recorded cases to date are:

- .um un-delegation
- .yu retirement
- .an retirement

As the DRDWG has noted, although the frequency is very low, there is no policy regarding the retirement of ccTLDs and the (three) practices seem insufficient to properly frame such a critical activity. In their Final report the DRDWG therefore recommended that the ccNSO undertakes a policy development process on the retirement of ccTLDs

- .UM case
 - At request of ccTLD manager and government
 - No registrations at time of request and decision (2007)
 - Current status IANA Root Zone Database: Not assigned
 - Current status ISO 3166-1: Assigned
- .AN case
 - Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist, after restructuring of Kingdom of Netherlands (2010)
 - Retirement Part of delegation of .CW delegation process 2010
 - Closure of retirement process in 2015
 - Current status IANA Root Zone Database: retired
 - Current status ISO 3166-1: Transitionally reserved (assigned-> transitionally reserved)
- YU
 - Break-up of Yugoslavia
 - Part of delegation of .RS delegation process
 - Process initiated in 2007 (with the delegation of .rs) and completed in 2009
 - Current status IANA Root Zone Database: not included in IANA Root Zone Database
 - Current status ISO 3166-1: Transitionally reserved (assigned-> transitionally reserved)

¹ <https://ccnso.icann.org/workinggroups/drd-wg-retirement-report-07mar11-en.pdf>

² The retirement process of .AN was completed in 2015, see <http://www.iana.org/domains/root/db/an.html>

Country names might be removed from ISO 3166-1 for various reasons³

- A country might change a significant part of its name, for example Burma (BU) was changed to Myanmar (MM) in 1989. The alpha-4 code element for the formerly used country name is therefore BUMM.
- A country may divide into two or more new ones, for example Czechoslovakia was divided into Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. The code element for the formerly used country name Czechoslovakia is CSHH, HH meaning that no single successor country exists. Later is CS used for Serbia causing all kind confusion worldwide. With the subsequent separation of Montenegro as a separate country the code CS got retired again and the alpha-4 code for CS is also CSXX so there are now two different statuses for CS: *Formerly used* and *transitionally reserved*.
- Two or more countries may merge for example Democratic Yemen (YD) and Yemen Arab Republic (YE) merged into the Republic of Yemen (YE) in 1990. The code element used for the formerly used country name Democratic Yemen is YDYE.

High Level overview of Issues pertaining to Retirement

- Consistency of terminology
 - See summary of cases
- What triggers a retirement?
 - Change in ISO 3166-1?
 - Substantial Change of name in case of IDN ccTLD?
 - Change of status (from Assigned / to ?)
 - Merge or Division of a country?
- Who triggers retirement process?
 - IANA Function operator?
 - ICANN?
 - ccTLD manager? Government?
 - Significantly Interested parties? Is there an impact on SIP
- Additional conditions to a ccTLD be retired?
 - No more domain names under management?
 - Agreement to retire by Significantly Interested Parties
 - Other conditions?
 - Only future cases?

³ This is language that is not included in the official standard, but for illustration from the ISO 3166 website: http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes_glossary.html

- Conditionality to a delegation of subsequent ccTLD?
 - Retirement .YU -> part of delegation .RS
 - Retirement .AN -> part of delegation .CW
- Compliance with conditions?
 - Who does monitoring, if any?
 - Any consequences of non-compliance?

Related issue

According to RFC 1591, *the IANA is not in the business of deciding what is and what is not a country. The selection of the ISO 3166 list as a basis for country code top-level domain names was made with the knowledge that ISO has a procedure for determining which entities should be and should not be on that list.*

Looking at the ISO 3166-1 list, some of the entries are related to current or former geopolitical entities and some are not. This is particular the case for those entries, which are included in the other, then the Officially Assigned categories⁴:

- *Exceptionally Reserved Codes* (includes: AC, EU, UK, but also UN [United Nations], and FX). These are defined as codes that have been reserved for a particular use at special request of a national ISO member body, governments or international organizations. For example, the code UK has been reserved at the request of the United Kingdom so that it cannot be used for any other country. Note this includes some ccTLDs, but not all and hence are also subject to retirement.
- *Transitionally Reserved Codes*: Codes that are reserved during a transitional period while new code elements that may replace them are taken into use. This results from changes in the standard. For example, the country codes for the former Yugoslavia have been reserved when it was removed from ISO 3166-1.
- *Indeterminately reserved* – a code that has been indeterminately reserved for use in a certain way. Usually this is justified by their presence in other coding systems. For example, several codes have been reserved by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) because they have been used in its Standard ST.3.

Formerly used (includes for example .by, Belarus). Codes that used to be part of the standard but that are no longer in use. See also alpha-4 codes.

Alpha-4 code – a four-letter code that represents a country name that is no longer in use. The structure depends on the reason why the country name was removed from ISO 3166-1 and added to ISO 3166-3.

Looking at the different categories, which are part of the ISO 3166-1, most two-letter codes are considered eligible as ccTLD, however some are not. Hence some can be retired and some not.

⁴ These definitions can be found at: http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes_glossary.html. Please note that these definitions are not the same as included in the official standard itself.

Question: should the section of RFC 1591 on ISO 3166 be clarified, i.e. which entries are eligible as ccTLDs moving forwards, through a similar effort as the FoI WG? The way the relevant section is interpreted has changed since 1994 (publication of RFC 1591), most importantly through the ICANN Board decision in September 2000 (see Annex A). Accordingly, *alpha-2 codes not on the ISO 3166-1 list are delegable as ccTLDs only in cases where the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency, on its exceptional reservation list, has issued a reservation of the code that covers any application of ISO 3166-1 that needs a coded representation in the name of the country, territory, or area involved.*

This interpretation was confirmed by Board decision in March 2005⁵.

⁵ <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/minutes-2005-03-21-en>

Annex A. ICANN Board interpretation of RFC 1591 reference to ISO 3166-1.

25 Sep 2000

At its meeting on 25 September 2000, the ICANN Board of Directors adopted the following resolutions:

Delegation of ccTLDs

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Whereas, the IANA has received various applications for establishment of ccTLDs involving alpha-2 codes not on [the ISO 3166-1](#) list but on the reserved list published by the [ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency](#);

Whereas, the IANA's practice on the delegability of such codes has varied from time to time in the past;

Whereas, the IANA staff has requested guidance as to the appropriate practice to follow regarding such codes;

It is therefore RESOLVED [00.74] that the IANA staff is advised that alpha-2 codes not on the ISO 3166-1 list are delegable as ccTLDs only in cases where the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency, on its exceptional reservation list, has issued a reservation of the code that covers any application of ISO 3166-1 that needs a coded representation in the name of the country, territory, or area involved;

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