

NCSG Statement on the globalization of the IANA functions

The Noncommercial Stakeholder Group (NCSG) welcomes the 13 March 2014 statement from the U.S. Commerce Department announcing its intention to “transition key Internet domain name functions to the global multistakeholder community.” We support this move because an Internet governance regime that gives one national government exclusive powers over a global resource is open to the criticism that it is politically biased. We believe this has promoted divisiveness and tendencies toward Internet fragmentation and we feel strongly that this change in governance is long overdue.

NCSG supports all 5 of the principles proposed by NTIA to guide the transition. We agree that the transition should:

- Support and enhance the multistakeholder model;
- Maintain the security, stability, and resiliency of the Internet DNS;
- Meet the needs and expectations of the global customers and partners of the IANA services;
- Maintain the openness of the Internet;
- Not replace the NTIA role with a governmental or an inter-governmental organization.

It is very important to replace the current system with a carefully considered, well -designed alternative. We note that noncommercial stakeholders have been leaders in developing plans for the proposed transition. Submissions to the Netmundial conference from two NCSG members, the Internet Governance Project and Avri Doria, have set out specific proposals for the transition. Consistent with both of these stakeholder contributions, NCSG proposes an additional principle to guide the transition. The transition should seriously consider:

- Enhancing the accountability of ICANN through structural separation of the DNS root zone management and IANA functions from ICANN's policy making functions

The root zone management and IANA functions, which are currently performed by Verisign, Inc. and ICANN under contracts with the U.S. government, are clerical, technical and operational. The policy making activities of ICANN, on the other hand, are highly political. NCSG believes that separating those two aspects of DNS governance into separate organizations is an idea that should be seriously considered in the transition. Separating them could help ensure that those with policy and political objectives must win support for their ideas in a fair and open policy development process, and cannot arbitrarily impose them upon Internet users and service providers by virtue of their control of the operational levers of the domain name system.

The existing IANA contract attempts to keep the two separate; however, if ICANN simply absorbs the IANA and Verisign functions without any contractual obligations from the U.S. government, some see a danger that the two could become integrated and intermingled in unhealthy ways. The Department of Commerce has asked ICANN to “convene stakeholders across the global Internet community to craft an appropriate transition plan.” We hope that ICANN's management

will convene a process, not control it. The transition will not work unless ICANN runs a truly open and deliberative process that allows all ideas to be considered and the best ideas to win. This means that stakeholders from outside ICANN processes should be included in the transition.

NCSG is the voice of civil society and nonprofit organizations in ICANN's domain name policy making organ, the Generic Names Supporting Organization. It is composed of two constituencies, the Noncommercial Users Constituency (<http://ncuc.org>) and the Non-Profit Operational Constituencies (<http://www.npoc.org>)