Regional Internet Registries Communiqué
to the
Government Advisory Committee
of the
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

24 March 2003

The Regional Internet Registries are taking this opportunity to communicate to the Government Advisory Committee (GAC) of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) their view of the roles and responsibilities of the GAC with regard to Internet Number Resources.

1. Introduction.

The Regional Internet Registries are:

- Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (http://www.apnic.net) (APNIC)

- The American Registry for Internet Numbers (http://www.arin.net) (ARIN)

- Latin American and Caribbean Internet Addresses Registry (http://www.lacnic.net) (LACNIC)

- Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (http://www.ripe.net) (RIPE NCC)

The Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) are responsible for a critical component in the operational infrastructure of the Internet. They execute this responsibility by jointly undertaking the role of management of Internet Number Resources through the allocation of Internet Protocol addresses (currently IPv4 and IPv6) and the identifiers used in Internet inter-domain routing (currently Border Gateway Protocol autonomous system numbers (ASNs)) to network operators and Local Internet Registries. The RIRs manage the part of the DNS name space that pertains to these Internet Number Resources (currently contained within in-addr.arpa and ip6.arpa). These managerial roles are in support of the ultimate requirement within the Internet to associate network resources with numbers drawn from the relevant public Internet number space.

The objectives of Internet Number Resource management are those of responsible stewardship of the resource, ensuring that the resources are managed fairly, uniformly, and that there is long-term availability in all geographic areas for present and future operators and users of the Internet. The RIRs perform this today, using a regional delineation of areas of responsibility on an approximate continental scale. The RIRs are mindful that in order to execute these roles effectively they must operate within

parameters of stability, predictability and efficiency of provided services, together with fairness, openness to participation and transparency in the related area of determination of Internet Number Resources management policies. To achieve this goal the RIRs have been guided by the following principles in their operations:

> a. policy development regarding numbering resources is realized by means of accessible, open, objective, transparent, non-discriminatory, and bottom-up procedures;

> b. allocation policies regarding numbering resources are objective, transparent, non-discriminatory and proportionate;

> c. allocation decisions are made in an objective, transparent and non-discriminatory manner following allocation policies;

> d. the system guarantees continuity of operations.

The availability and usage of certain Internet Numbering Resources are constrained very strictly by intrinsic technical aspects of their design. Recognizing these constraints, the RIRs have specific responsibility to coordinate the provision of Internet Numbering Resources in support of both present Internet operations and the sustainable future development of the Internet.

The establishment of Regional Internet Registries was initiative by the IETF in 1992 (through RFC1466, which proposes implementation of the recommendations of RFC1174 (1990)). RIPE NCC and APNIC were established soon afterwards, in 1992 and 1993 respectively, and have undertaken their function ever since. ARIN exists today as a continuation of the original InterNIC, while LACNIC was established in 2002. The establishment of three of the RIRs therefore precedes that of ICANN and the GAC by some 6 years.

2. Structure.

The four existing RIRs are set up as not-for-profit organizations whose membership is open to all interested parties. The membership of the RIRs consists of thousands of Internet operators (ISPs) and other companies and stakeholders. Each RIR has an Executive Board that is elected by the membership. The activities of the RIR are approved by the membership.

The RIRs do not charge for Internet Number Resources. There is an initial and annual fee for the services that are required to support the management of the Internet Number Resources. These services include the following, which are conducted within a structured industry self-regulatory framework:

> a. Allocation of Internet Protocol addresses (currently IPv4 and IPv6);

b. Allocation of identifiers used in Internet inter-domain routing (currently Border Gateway Protocol autonomous system numbers (ASNs));

c. Provision and maintenance of the part of the DNS name space that pertains to these Internet Number Resources (currently contained within in-addr.arpa and ip6.arpa;

d. Provision and maintenance of WHOIS information directory;

e. Provision and maintenance of Internet Routing Registry information;

f. Activities required to facilitate the policy development process such as:

    1) Operation and maintenance of electronic mail discussion lists;

    2) Conduct of public policy meetings;

    3) Publication of policy documents;

g. Conduct of member meetings;

h. Conduct of elections;

i. Provision and maintenance of web sites;

j. Publication of informational documents such as newsletters;

k. Provision of training.

In addition to these services, the RIRs contribute to the ICANN budget and completely fund all activities of the ICANN Address Supporting Organization (ASO).

All RIR corporate reports, including financial information, are publicly available on each RIR web site.

APNIC is the only RIR with an active National Internet Registry (NIR) structure. After a period of some years during which new NIRs were no longer accepted by APNIC (due to policy and operational inconsistencies), the NIR membership structure was reopened in 2002. New NIRs will now be recognized by application to APNIC's Executive Board, providing that they have official Government sanction, and can demonstrate the ability and capacity to carry out delegated responsibilities in accordance with APNIC policy. It should be noted that NIRs do not have the exclusive right to perform resource distribution functions in their country or economy; any ISP may choose freely to receive resource services from APNIC or from the available NIR (where it exists).

3. Policy Development

The RIRs facilitate the development of policy regarding the management of Internet Number Resources.   This is a key self regulatory aspect of the management of Internet Number Resources. Policy is developed according to the following principles:

> a. Accessible and Open. The process is open to everyone. Participation is not contingent upon membership or any other status. The process in conducted in public policy fora and on public electronic mail lists;

> b. Transparent. All electronic mail is archived and is publicly available to anyone. The minutes of all public policy fora and the meetings of the RIR Executive Boards are publicly available to anyone;

> c. Documented. All policies are formally documented. All procedures used to implement Internet Number Resource management policy are formally documented. These documents are publicly available to anyone at no charge;

> d. Developed "Bottom-Up". Policies are developed to reflect:

> > 1) the evolving needs of the operators and users of internet services;

> > 2) changes in technology.

In this manner policy development is undertaken in a responsible manner that is accessible to the affected parties of any process. The addressing community and the RIRs share a number of common principles and interests, including:

> a. Ensuring that the Internet is a stable, reliable and secure system of interoperating components;

> b. Ensuring that there is broad and informed participation in the policy development process to ensure that the implications of proposed policies are well understood by all potentially affected parties;

> c. Ensuring that the outcomes of the policy development process reflect consensus outcomes of all participants in the policy development process, and that the views of stakeholders and potentially affected parties are included within this process;

> d. Ensure that the policy outcomes treat Internet Number Resources as a neutral and accessible resource with a distribution function;

e. Taking into account the views of all interested parties (private sector, government and public authorities, and users) and informing the public sector of the role and purpose of the number resource management function;

f. Supporting innovation where feasible and appropriate.

4. The RIRs and ICANN.

The ICANN Evolution and Reform exercise in 2002 has prompted the RIRs to carefully consider the relationship between the RIRs and ICANN. It is recognized that, like any private corporate entity, ICANN's continued existence is not protected, and ICANN's ability to continue to be in a position to execute all current IANA contracts should also not be simply assumed.

In approaching this issue the RIRs have undertaken some risk assessment in terms of the various external events that may compromise the RIRs ability to execute their role, or events that may compromise the stability of the Internet itself, and have conducted talks both with ICANN, and with a number of other stakeholders in the regulatory and public sectors.

The current position of the RIRs with respect to ICANN can be summarized as follows:

a. Policy Development. The RIRs believe that within the area of address management there is a valid role for a lightweight external review body with respect to global RIR policies, as part of an overall RIR requirement for check, balance and review in the global RIR policy determination process. The RIRs view this as a requirement for the policy development process to be protected to so that policy can only be made, changed, or overturned in a bottom-up process through open, transparent, and documented procedures.

b. Internet Number Resources. The RIRs believe that within the area of the Internet Number Resource pool that these resources are public resources. In this regard there is a valid role for a lightweight external body to coordinate the allocation of Internet Number Resources to the RIRs in accordance with global policies pertaining to the management of these resources and to protect the unallocated pool of these resources to which the RIRs must have free access, through established procedures at all times. This role may be carried out by ICANN, or by another suitably-qualified organization.

5. Role of the GAC.

Responsible administration of a common public resource entails the active participation of many interested parties. The RIRs recognize the legitimacy and value of public interests in this activity, and have undertaken, and continue to undertake an active

dialogue with various national and regional public sector entities on the topic of responsible Internet Number Resource administration and the relative roles of the RIRs and the public sector in this domain. The RIRs recognize that part of this public sector interest can be expressed through venues such as the Governmental Advisory Committee of ICANN.

The RIRs understand that the GAC has assumed, in addition to its role, as an advisory committee to ICANN, certain outreach and coordination responsibilities in relation to its member Governments. In order to support the RIRs' functions with respect to Internet Number Resource management, the RIRs therefore expect that GAC members should undertake at least the following specific activities:

> a. Advise their respective governments in regards to the management of Internet Number Resources as detailed above;

> b. Ensure that where their respective governments are participants in other organizations and fora, their representatives are fully apprised of issues relating to the management of Internet Number Resources, and can therefore ensure that informed decisions are made at all times.

The RIRs are of the opinion that regular liaison between the RIRs and the GAC is an important ongoing requirement in order to ensure that the above functions can be carried out effectively.