

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 bound to be politically biased, divisive and promote tendencies toward Internet fragmentation. This change is long overdue.

NCSG supports all 5 of the principles NTIA proposed 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 expectation of the global customers and partners of the IANA services;
- Maintain the openness of the Internet;
- Not replace the NTIA role with a government-led 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 blueprints for the transition. Consistent with both of these proposals, NCSG proposes an additional principle to guide the transition. The transition should:

- Enhance the accountability of ICANN through structural separation of the DNS root zone management functions from ICANN’s policy making functions

The root zone management functions, which are currently performed by Verisign, Inc. and IANA under contracts with the U.S. government, are clerical, technical and operational, the policy making functions of ICANN, on the other hand, are highly political. NCSG believes that those two aspects of DNS governance must be kept apart, in separate organizations. Separating them ensures 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 global 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 oversight from the U.S. government, there is a danger that the two could become integrated and intermingled in unhealthy ways. That is why the NCSG, along with supporters from other stakeholder groups, will insist on this new principle of separation during the transition process.

The Department of Commerce has asked ICANN to “conven[e] stakeholders across the global Internet community to craft an appropriate transition plan.” Unfortunately, ICANN’s management seems to have interpreted this as a mandate to implement its own transition plan, in which it would simply take over the IANA functions with no oversight. NCSG wishes to remind ICANN that it has been charged with convening a process, not with controlling it. The transition will not work unless ICANN runs a truly open and deliberative process that allows the all ideas to be considered and the best ideas to win.

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>)