

Standing Committee on the Law of Trademarks, Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications

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UPDATE ON TRADEMARK-RELATED ASPECTS OF THE DOMAIN NAME SYSTEM

Document prepared by the Secretariat

1. At the thirty-sixth session of the Standing Committee on the Law of Trademarks, Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications (SCT), the Chair stated that the SCT had taken note of document SCT/36/4 (Update on Trademark-related Aspects of the Domain Name System) and that the Secretariat was requested to keep Member States informed on future developments in the Domain Name System (DNS) (see document SCT/36/6, paragraph 86). Accordingly, the Secretariat has prepared the present document which offers the requested update.

I. DOMAIN NAME CASE ADMINISTRATION

A. UNIFORM DOMAIN NAME DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY

2. The DNS raises a number of challenges for the protection of Intellectual Property (IP), which, due to the global nature of the Internet, call for an international approach. WIPO has addressed these challenges since 1998 by developing specific solutions, most notably in the

First¹ and Second² WIPO Internet Domain Name Processes. Through the Arbitration and Mediation Center (Center), WIPO provides trademark owners with efficient international mechanisms to deal with the bad-faith registration and use of domain names corresponding to their trademark rights. The principal mechanism administered by the Center, the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP) was adopted by ICANN on the basis of recommendations made by WIPO in the First WIPO Internet Domain Name Process.

3. The UDRP is limited to clear cases of bad-faith, abusive registration and use of domain names and has proven highly useful for trademark owners³. Since December 1999, the Center has administered over 36,000 UDRP-based cases⁴. Trademark holders in 2016 filed 3,036 UDRP-based complaints with the Center, a 10 per cent increase over 2015 filings. As of January 2017, the total number of domain names in WIPO UDRP-based cases approached 67,000.

4. A diverse mixture of enterprises, institutions, and individuals used the Center's domain name dispute resolution procedures in 2016. The top five sectors for complainant business activity were Banking and Finance, Heavy Industry and Machinery, Fashion, Internet and Information Technology, and Biotechnology and Pharmaceuticals. Especially the filings related to fashion and luxury brands include those by rights owners alleging counterfeiting via the web pages offered under the disputed domain name. At the same time, cases involving fraudulent behavior and phishing now feature regularly. Reflecting the global scope of this dispute mechanism, named parties to WIPO cases through 2016 have represented 178 countries. In function of the language of the applicable registration agreement of the domain name at issue, WIPO UDRP proceedings have so far been conducted in 21 languages⁵.

5. All WIPO UDRP panel decisions are posted on the Center's website. The Center offers a unique online overview of broad decision trends on important case issues via the WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions (WIPO Overview 2.0). Distilling thousands of UDRP cases handled by the Center, this globally relied-upon instrument was created to help identify and stimulate consistency of UDRP jurisprudence⁶. To facilitate access to decisions according to subject matter, the Center also offers a widely used online searchable Legal Index of WIPO UDRP Decisions⁷. These WIPO resources are accessible globally free of charge.

6. Mindful of WIPO's foundational role in the UDRP, the Center monitors developments in the DNS with a view to adjusting its resources and practices⁸. The Center regularly organizes Domain Name Dispute Resolution Workshops to update interested parties⁹ as well as meetings of its Domain Name Panelists.

¹ The Management of Internet Names and Addresses: Intellectual Property Issues – Final Report of the First WIPO Internet Domain Name Process, WIPO publication No. 439, also available at: <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/processes/process1/report>.

² The Recognition of Rights and the Use of Names in the Internet Domain Name System – Report of the Second WIPO Internet Domain Name Process, WIPO Publication No. 843, also available at: <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/processes/process2/report>.

³ The UDRP does not prevent either party from submitting a dispute to a competent court of justice; but very few cases that have been decided under the UDRP have been brought before a national court of justice. See Selected UDRP-related Court Cases at <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/challenged>.

⁴ The Center makes available online real-time statistics to assist WIPO UDRP case parties and neutrals, trademark attorneys, domain name registrants, domain name policy makers, the media, and academics. Available statistics cover many categories, such as “areas of complainant activity”, “domain name script”, and “25 most cited decisions in complaint”. See <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/statistics>.

⁵ In alphabetical order, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, and Vietnamese.

⁶ The WIPO Overview 2.0 is available at: <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/search/overview2.0>.

⁷ This professional resource is available at: <http://www.wipo.int/cgi-bin/domains/search/legalindex>.

⁸ See, e.g., WO/GA/41/17 Rev. 2, paragraphs 14 to 16.

⁹ Such workshops organized by the Center are listed at: <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/events>.

B. COUNTRY CODE TOP-LEVEL DOMAINS (ccTLDs)

7. While the mandatory application of the UDRP is limited to domain names registered in generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs), such as .com and more recently introduced new gTLDs, the Center also assists national ccTLD registries in their establishment of registration conditions and dispute resolution procedures that conform with best practices in registry management and IP protection. These procedures are mostly modeled after the UDRP, but may take account of the particular circumstances and needs of individual ccTLDs. The Center currently provides domain name dispute resolution services to 75 ccTLD registries; based on an updated procedure to resolve domain name disputes under the .FR (France) and .RE (Reunion Island) ccTLDs, more recently this includes the addition of the .PM (St. Pierre and Miquelon), .TF (French Southern Territories), .WF (Wallis and Futuna Islands), and .YT (Mayotte) ccTLDs¹⁰.

II. POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DOMAIN NAME SYSTEM

8. A number of policy developments in relation to ICANN present both opportunities and challenges for owners and users of IP rights. One is ICANN's introduction of up to 1,400 new gTLDs. Such new gTLDs may be of an "open" nature (similar to .com), or may take on more specific or restrictive characteristics, for example taking the form of .[brand], .[city], .[community], .[culture], .[industry], or .[language]. An important related development concerns the introduction of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) at the top level. Also, ICANN's envisaged expansion of the DNS raises rights protection questions in connection with the Second WIPO Internet Domain Name Process.

A. NEW GENERIC TOP-LEVEL DOMAINS

9. ICANN implementation of its New gTLD Program formally approved in June 2011¹¹ is detailed in its much-revised "Applicant Guidebook"¹². Delegation of the first new gTLDs into the Internet's Root Zone took place in October 2013 with over 1,200 more delegated by January 2017¹³. Together, these new gTLDs appear to have so far attracted over 27 million second-level registrations¹⁴.

10. A number of new Rights Protection Mechanisms (RPMs) have emerged from a series of ICANN committees and processes for new gTLDs¹⁵. Set out below is a broad description of these ICANN RPMs, for the top level and the second level, respectively.

(i) Top Level Rights Protection Mechanisms

– Pre-(TLD) Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure

11. This mechanism allowed trademark owners to lodge Legal Rights Objections (LRO) to new gTLD applications at the top level where certain substantive criteria were met¹⁶. The

¹⁰ The full list of ccTLDs which have retained the Center as domain name dispute resolution provider is available at: <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/cctld>.

¹¹ See <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-20jun11-en.htm>. For further background including references, see document WO/GA/39/10, in particular paragraph 14.

¹² ICANN's Applicant Guidebook is available at: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb>.

¹³ Delegated new gTLDs are listed at: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/program-status/delegated-strings>.

¹⁴ See <https://ntldstats.com>.

¹⁵ For further background including references, see WO/GA/39/10, in particular paragraphs 23 to 30. It is noted here that ICANN rejected a proposal for a "Globally Protected Marks List".

¹⁶ Other objection grounds recognized by ICANN were: "String Confusion Objections", "Community Objections", and "Limited Public Interest Objections". The Applicant Guidebook further includes a number of other procedures which governments may avail themselves of following ICANN announcement of new gTLD applications. Notably,

Center assisted ICANN in the establishment of these criteria on the basis of the “WIPO Joint Recommendation Concerning Provisions on the Protection of Marks, and Other Industrial Property Rights in Signs, on the Internet”¹⁷.

12. Appointed by ICANN as the exclusive provider of LRO dispute resolution services¹⁸, the Center received 69 compliant LRO filings, which it completed processing by September 2013¹⁹. All WIPO LRO expert panel determinations are available on the Center’s website²⁰, as is a Center report on the LRO process²¹.

– Post-(TLD) Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure (PDDRP)

13. In early 2009, the Center communicated to ICANN a concrete substantive proposal for a permanent administrative option that would allow for the filing of a complaint with respect to an approved new gTLD registry operator whose manner of operation or use of its registry is alleged to cause or materially contribute to trademark abuse²². The proposal’s intent was to offer standardized assistance to ICANN’s own compliance oversight responsibilities, by providing an administrative alternative to court litigation, encouraging responsible conduct by relevant actors and including appropriate safe-harbors²³.

14. Following various ICANN committee processes and consultations with registry operators, the effectiveness of this PDDRP in the form adopted by ICANN remains uncertain, in particular given the addition of overlapping procedural layers, and issues concerning the intended substantive scope of this mechanism. In light of broader policy interests however, the Center in 2013 agreed with ICANN to become a provider for the trademark PDDRP²⁴.

(ii) Second Level Rights Protection Mechanisms

– Trademark Clearinghouse

15. ICANN’s New gTLD Program includes a “Trademark Clearinghouse” as a centralized repository of authenticated trademark data which could be invoked as the basis for filing under new gTLD RPMs²⁵. The Center has commented that any such Clearinghouse should not

section 1.1.2.4 provides for “GAC Early Warning,” and section 1.1.2.7 provides for “Receipt of GAC Advice on New gTLDs” for the ICANN Board’s consideration.

¹⁷ Adopted by the WIPO General Assembly in September 2001; see http://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/development_iplaw/pub845-toc.htm.

¹⁸ See section 3.2 of the ICANN Applicant Guidebook at <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/objection-procedures-04jun12-en.pdf>.

¹⁹ See WIPO Rules for New gTLD Dispute Resolution, and Schedule of Fees and Costs, respectively at <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/wipolorrules.pdf> and <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/lro/fees/>; see WIPO-registered LRO cases at <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/lro/cases/>.

²⁰ See <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/lro/cases/>.

²¹ The WIPO LRO report notes that an overwhelming majority of LROs were filed against applications for gTLD strings with descriptive or dictionary meaning. Many expert panels concluded that where a trademark owner has adopted a common dictionary term as a trademark, a gTLD application intended solely to take advantage of such common dictionary meaning would not as such violate the decision standards for LROs. In certain cases panels addressed trademark registrations that were primarily obtained for the purpose of supporting an application for a new gTLD and/or LRO, with little or no demonstrable prior use. See <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/lroreport.pdf>.

²² See <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/icann130309.pdf>.

²³ Given the perceived convergence of registry, registrar, and registrant roles within the DNS, the Center has further recommended, *inter alia* taking account of its UDRP-based experiences, and ICANN’s decision to allow for cross-ownership between registries and registrars (see <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-05nov10-en.htm>), that ICANN consider extending the PDDRP for registries also to registrar conduct (see, *inter alia*, <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/icann260310rap.pdf>).

²⁴ No cases have been filed under this mechanism as yet.

²⁵ The Clearinghouse allows for inclusion of registered word marks, word marks protected by statute or treaty or validated by court, and “[o]ther marks that constitute intellectual property” (the latter being undefined). With respect to RPMs utilizing Clearinghouse data, the availability of “Sunrise” services (i.e., an opportunity for a trademark owner, for a fee, to preemptively register an exact match of its mark as a domain name) is limited to those trademarks for which current use can be demonstrated. Whether or not substantiated by demonstration of current use, trademark

unfairly burden rights holders in the treatment of trademark registrations legitimately obtained through examination and registration systems as applied in many global jurisdictions, and that, if and where relevant, practical measures may be envisaged to identify any allegedly inappropriate invocation of rights in specific contexts. As of April 2016, the Clearinghouse contained over 40,500 entries²⁶.

– Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) System

16. While importantly the UDRP remains available as a curative tool for new gTLD disputes involving the considered transfer of a disputed domain name to the trademark owner, ICANN has introduced what is intended to be a lighter second-level RPM for appropriate cases²⁷.

17. Having evolved from a sequence of ICANN processes and committees, the URS continues to raise a number of questions, including in terms of its relationship to the UDRP²⁸. ICANN invited tenders from prospective URS providers, to which after careful consideration of the ICANN URS model and related resources, the Center was not in a position to apply²⁹. The Center continues to closely monitor developments.

B. ICANN'S PLANNED REVISION OF THE WIPO-INITIATED UDRP

18. Accommodating the dynamic development of the DNS, the UDRP has been offering an effective alternative to court litigation for trademark owners, domain name registrants, and registration authorities. Nevertheless, following discussions in 2011 at which the clear majority of participants were of the opinion that more harm than good could result from any review of the UDRP by ICANN as a registration-driven body³⁰, a decision was taken by ICANN's Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) to review the UDRP following the launch of new gTLDs. ICANN's Preliminary Issue Report on this topic was issued in October 2015 describing a range of complex substantive and process-related questions³¹. In this regard, the Center provided observations highlighting the UDRP's long proven success and risks associated with any attempted ICANN revision of the UDRP. Following discussions at the ICANN October 2015 meeting and public comments received, ICANN issued its Final Issue Report in January 2016 recommending that the GNSO launch a Policy Development Process (PDP) to review all RPMs in two phases; the initial phase is now focusing on RPMs developed for the New gTLD Program, and the second phase will focus on the UDRP³². The Center continues to closely follow ICANN stakeholders' intentions with regard to the UDRP, and trademark RPMs generally.

owners would also be eligible to participate in a time-limited "Claims" service (i.e., notice to a potential domain name registrant of the existence of a potentially conflicting trademark right, and notice to the relevant trademark owner(s) in the event that the registrant nevertheless proceeds with domain name registration). As mandated by ICANN, the availability of the Claims service is for a period of 90 days after a new gTLD is opened for general public registration, but users of the Clearinghouse can opt-in to receive notifications indefinitely. The demonstration of use required for Sunrise services similarly applies to the invocation of trademarks as a basis for a complaint filed under the "Uniform Rapid Suspension" RPM described herein.

²⁶ See <http://www.trademark-clearinghouse.com/content/stats-0>.

²⁷ The Center for its part communicated to ICANN in April 2009 a discussion draft of an "Expedited (Domain Name) Suspension Mechanism" (see <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/icann030409.pdf>) and has made subsequent proposals for a streamlined mechanism based on this model at ICANN Meetings (see <http://prague44.icann.org/node/31773> and <http://toronto45.icann.org/node/34325>). Such proposals took account of the need to strike a balance between the protection of trademark rights recognized by law, the practical interests of good-faith registration authorities to minimize operational burdens, and the legitimate expectations of *bona fide* domain name registrants.

²⁸ An extensive inventory of these issues is provided *inter alia* in the Center's letter to ICANN of December 2, 2010, available at: <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/icann021210.pdf>.

²⁹ The question of accreditation of providers gives rise to concerns as to the stability of RPMs; WIPO raised concerns about this as early as 2007 in the context of the UDRP (see <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/icann040707.pdf>).

³⁰ See <https://community.icann.org/display/gnsoudrpd/Webinar+on+the+Current+State+of+the+UDRP>; see also more generally document WO/GA/39/10, paragraph 31.

³¹ See <http://gnsso.icann.org/en/issues/new-gtlds/rpm-prelim-issue-09oct15-en.pdf>.

³² See <http://gnsso.icann.org/mailing-lists/archives/council/pdf4KFmJ1NC7e.pdf>.

C. INTERNATIONALIZED DOMAIN NAMES

19. As noted in paragraph 8, another significant policy development in the DNS is the introduction of IDNs (non-Latin script) at the top level³³. Many of these were among the first new gTLDs announced by ICANN for delegation into the DNS root zone.

D. OTHER IDENTIFIERS

20. In addition to and in connection with the above, there are further developments taking place at ICANN in relation to the protection of non-trademark identifiers.

(i) International Governmental Organizations (IGOs)

21. It is recalled that the First WIPO Internet Domain Name Process addressed the relationship between domain names and trademarks. The Second WIPO Internet Domain Name Process concerned the relationship between domain names and other types of identifiers that had not been addressed, including country names and IGO names and acronyms.

22. The 2002 WIPO General Assembly recommended amending the UDRP in order to provide protection for country names and for the names and acronyms of IGOs³⁴. The WIPO Secretariat transmitted these recommendations to ICANN in February 2003³⁵.

23. Following ICANN deliberations³⁶, ICANN's New gTLD Applicant Guidebook limited its consideration of the protection of the names and acronyms of IGOs to providing recourse through the pre-delegation objection procedure concerning the top level (i.e., an applied-for TLD), discussed in paragraphs 11 and 12 above. However, following sustained IGO efforts, ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) advised the ICANN Board that IGO identifiers should be granted protection against inappropriate third-party registration in the DNS prior to the delegation of any new gTLDs³⁷. The GAC further advised the ICANN Board that, building on existing criteria for ".int" second-level registrations, it would collaborate with IGOs to develop a list of IGO names and acronyms to be protected. Such protection would be at the second level for the current round of new gTLDs, and at both the second and top level in any future new gTLD rounds. The GAC also advised the Board that as to the second-level, pending implementation work, interim protection for IGO names and acronyms should be provided through a moratorium on third-party registration. This remains in place.

24. The ICANN Board responded to the GAC indicating that it had adopted a resolution for interim protection at the second level based on the existing .int criteria, via an ICANN reserve list of IGO identifiers, to be withheld from third-party registration through the new gTLD Registry Agreement. ICANN invited qualifying IGOs to identify themselves to ICANN, while also seeking provision by the GAC (with IGOs) of a consolidated IGO package comprising the criteria and list of IGO names and acronyms for which the GAC advised protection³⁸. In response, an IGO coalition developed .int-based criteria for IGO protection and an accompanying list of IGOs,

³³ See also ICANN's Final Implementation Plan for IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process published in November 2009 (see <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/idn/fast-track/idn-cctld-implementation-plan-16nov09-en.pdf>). Since then, this has allowed for the introduction of IDN ccTLDs, associated with the two-letter codes in the ISO 3166-1 standard (see http://www.iso.org/iso/english_country_names_and_code_elements).

³⁴ See http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/govbody/en/wo_ga_28/wo_ga_28_3.pdf; see also documents SCT/9/8, paragraphs 6 to 11; and, SCT/9/9, paragraph 149.

³⁵ See <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/docs/wipo.doc>.

³⁶ For background, see WO/GA/41/17 Rev.2, in particular paragraphs 40 and 41.

³⁷ See

https://gacweb.icann.org/download/attachments/27132070/FINAL_Toronto_Communique_20121017.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1354149148000&api=v2.

³⁸ See

<https://gacweb.icann.org/download/attachments/27132070/Board%20Response%20to%20GAC%20Toronto%20Communiqu.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1361909146000&api=v2>.

which the IGO coalition forwarded to the ICANN Board in February 2013. This was followed by a GAC communication to the ICANN Board concerning IGO protection eligibility criteria³⁹, together with a list of protectable IGO names and acronyms⁴⁰.

25. On April 1, 2013, the Board wrote to the GAC with concerns as to how the protection of IGO acronyms would be reconciled with certain potentially legitimate third-party attempts to register domain names corresponding to a protected IGO acronym, and sought further particulars about the means by which cases of potentially legitimate co-existent use of such acronym could be managed in practice⁴¹. The GAC's response stressed the important global public mission of IGOs, committed to actively working to find a way forward, and reiterated its advice to the ICANN Board that preventative initial protection for listed IGO names and acronyms be in place before any new gTLDs would launch⁴².

26. In July 2013, following further discussions with ICANN and sustained efforts from IGOs, the GAC issued advice to the ICANN Board that highlighted the need for special preventative protection for IGO names and acronyms in the DNS⁴³. Following this advice, the ICANN Board issued a resolution extending interim protection for IGOs until the first meeting of the ICANN Board's New gTLD Program Committee (NGPC) after the November 2013 ICANN meeting⁴⁴.

27. In October 2013, the NGPC made a proposal for protection of IGO acronyms at the second level that fell short of providing IGO acronyms with the permanent preventative protection envisaged in previous GAC Communiqués⁴⁵. The IGO coalition responded to the NGPC indicating disappointment that the proposal was strictly curative in nature and did nothing to prevent harm from occurring in the first place, and also conveyed its concerns to the GAC.

28. The NGPC, the GAC, and IGOs met around ICANN's November 2013 Buenos Aires meeting. The NGPC indicated that although specific technical points of its October 2013 proposal could be worked on, full preventative protection of IGO acronyms was intentionally excluded. The GAC advised the ICANN Board that interim protections for IGO acronyms should remain in place until the dialogue between the GAC, the NGPC and IGOs ensuring implementation of protection was completed, but without reiterating the GAC's previous position about the need for preventative protection⁴⁶. In January 2014, the NGPC resolved to extend temporary protections for IGO acronyms until the NGPC made a final determination⁴⁷.

29. In parallel to these efforts, the GNSO had launched a PDP concerning IGO protection, in which process the Center with other IGO representatives participated. Over IGO objections, in November 2013 this GNSO process rejected preventative protection for IGO acronyms on the second level. Instead, it recommended curative protection mechanisms for IGO acronyms, coupled with the removal of the temporary protections for IGO acronyms in place. These recommendations were adopted unanimously by the GNSO Council in November 2013. In

³⁹ Such criteria comprise treaty-based IGOs with international legal personality, or which are UN Observers, or which are funds or programs of the UN.

⁴⁰ See <http://www.icann.org/en/news/correspondence/dryden-to-crocker-chalaby-22mar13-en>.

⁴¹ The Board also sought further specifics on means for periodic review of the list, along with clarification of any additional languages in which protection of IGO names and acronyms is sought. See <http://www.icann.org/en/news/correspondence/crocker-to-dryden-01apr13-en>.

⁴² See <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/gac-to-board-18apr13-en.pdf>.

⁴³ The GAC further advised that it expressly assumed that the ICANN Board was prepared to fully implement the GAC advice and focus on practical and effective implementation of preventative protection at the second level in new gTLDs, and that the interim protections for IGO names and acronyms should remain in place until the dialogue between the GAC, ICANN and IGOs was completed. See <http://durban47.icann.org/meetings/durban2013/presentation-gac-communique-18jul13-en.pdf>.

⁴⁴ See <http://www.icann.org/en/groups/board/documents/resolutions-new-gtld-17jul13-en.htm>.

⁴⁵ The GAC and the NGPC had cancelled their participation in a September 30 meeting proposed by IGOs.

⁴⁶ See <http://www.icann.org/en/news/correspondence/gac-to-board-20nov13-en.pdf>.

⁴⁷ See <http://www.icann.org/en/groups/board/documents/resolutions-new-gtld-09jan14-en.htm#2.d.i>.

response to this development, IGOs wrote to express concern noting that the mechanisms now foreseen would miss an important opportunity to curtail abuse of IGO acronyms in the DNS before harm could occur⁴⁸.

30. In February 2014, IGOs met with the ICANN NGPC representative to discuss the NGPC's October 2013 proposal. Following this, in March 2014, the NGPC provided a draft proposal for curative rights protection for IGO acronyms. Further discussions were held between IGOs and the NGPC in ICANN March 2014 meeting, where the GAC also advised the ICANN Board that it was awaiting the Board's response regarding the implementation of previous GAC advice.

31. In April 2014, the ICANN Board resolved to adopt the GNSO Council recommendations not in conflict with GAC advice (reserving from registration the full names of IGOs at the top and second levels, in two languages) while requesting more time to consider the recommendations that then differed from GAC advice (duration of "claims notices"⁴⁹ and a potential curative RPM). Notwithstanding this GAC advice and IGO positions, in June 2014, the GNSO Council voted to initiate a second PDP on the desirability and modalities of giving IGOs access to curative RPMs (such as the UDRP or URS). In October 2014, the GAC affirmed its prior advice seeking a solution for IGO identifier protection at the second level, whereby such protection should not require amending the existing UDRP⁵⁰. In January 2015, the NGPC again sought information from the GAC concerning the latter's understanding of "the nature and extent of the rights of international governmental organizations with respect to curative rights protections for IGO names and acronyms"⁵¹.

32. In June 2015, the IGOs, GAC, and ICANN Board representatives met at the ICANN Buenos Aires meeting. The ICANN Board took note of progress towards a possible alternative dispute resolution and emergency takedown mechanisms for protection of IGO identifiers and called for a "small group" to communicate interessionally with a view towards developing a concrete proposal for such mechanisms⁵². Notwithstanding continuing discussions, including respectively at the ICANN's June and November 2016 Helsinki and Hyderabad meetings, several questions remain as to the specifics of such mechanisms; it has again been affirmed however that any IGO-specific mechanism should not amend the existing UDRP. Together with other involved IGOs, the Center continues to closely monitor developments in this longstanding ICANN file, which now includes a nascent Board-facilitated dialogue.

(ii) Geographical Terms

33. Concerning geographical terms, the GAC in particular has expressed concerns about their use and protection in the new gTLDs⁵³. Concerning the top level, ICANN's Applicant Guidebook provides that "applications for strings that are country or territory names will not be approved, as they are not available under the New gTLD Program in this application round"⁵⁴. As to

⁴⁸ By way of example, the IGO letter cited illicit profiteering from UNICEF funding campaigns in the wake of humanitarian emergencies.

⁴⁹ See footnote 24.

⁵⁰ See

https://gacweb.icann.org/download/attachments/27132037/Los%20Angeles_GAC%20Communique_Final.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1413479079000&api=v2.

⁵¹ See <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/chalaby-to-schneider-22jan15-en.pdf>.

⁵² See

<https://gacweb.icann.org/display/gacweb/Governmental+Advisory+Committee?preview=/27132037/39256324/BA%20MinutesFINAL.pdf>.

⁵³ In 2007 the GAC issued the "GAC Principles regarding New gTLDs", which states *inter alia* that ICANN should avoid delegation of new gTLDs concerning country, territory or place names, and regional language or people descriptions, unless in agreement with the relevant governments or public authorities. Those GAC Principles further stated that new registries should adopt procedures for blocking/challenge of names with national or geographical significance at the second level upon demand of governments. See http://gac.icann.org/web/home/gTLD_principles.pdf.

⁵⁴ See <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/evaluation-procedures-04jun12-en.pdf>, from section 2.2.1.4.1 "Treatment of Country or Territory Names".

second-level registrations, ICANN's base registry agreement includes a "Schedule of Reserved Names at the Second Level in gTLD Registries" which makes provision for certain country and territory names⁵⁵. Applied-for strings which are considered by ICANN to be certain other geographical names, e.g., capital city names, must be accompanied by documentation of support or non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities⁵⁶.

34. GAC members have expressed further reservations regarding a number of new gTLD applications on grounds of correspondence to geographical or other "sensitive" terms, advising the ICANN Board not to proceed beyond initial evaluation, and seeking Board clarification on scope for applicants to modify their new gTLD applications to address specific GAC concerns⁵⁷.

35. In December 2016, ICANN authorized the release of all previously-reserved two-character domain names at the second level in new gTLDs provided that registry operators first allow respective governments a thirty-day period to purchase such domain names; require registrants to represent that they would not falsely imply government affiliations in connection with the use of such two-character domain name; and provide a post-registration complaints procedure⁵⁸. The Center submitted comments to ICANN noting that the Second WIPO Internet Domain Name Process considered the possibility of exploring measures for the UDRP to apply to third-level registrations in order to mitigate the potential for trademark abuse⁵⁹.

36. The Secretariat will continue to monitor developments and provide input where possible.

37. The SCT is invited to take note of the contents of this document.

[End of document]

⁵⁵ See <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/base-agreement-specs-04jun12-en.pdf> at Specification 5. Information concerning ICANN's "Authorization Process for Release of Two-Character ASCII Labels" is at <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/two-character-comments-consideration-2015-10-06-en>.

⁵⁶ See <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/evaluation-procedures-04jun12-en.pdf>, from section 2.2.1.4.2 "Geographic Names Requiring Government Support".

⁵⁷ See <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/gac-to-board-27mar14-en.pdf>, at "4. Specific Strings". While the Board has accepted the GAC's advice against proceeding with certain applications, it has sought further information from the GAC, as well as public comments, on a range of additional safeguards sought by the GAC concerning several broad categories of new gTLD applications such as for those new gTLDs which correspond to regulated industries or dictionary terms. See https://gacweb.icann.org/download/attachments/27132037/Beijing%20Communique%20april2013_Final.pdf. A GAC Sub-group on Geographic Names (a Sub-group of the GAC Working Group on Future New gTLDs) has developed a draft document for future New gTLD rounds outlining several public policy aspects related to geographic names which is currently subject to further ICANN discussions. See <https://gacweb.icann.org/download/attachments/27132037/Geo%20names%20in%20new%20gTLDs%20Updated%20%20V3%20%2029%20august%202014%5B4%5D.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1411549935000&api=v2>. At the GAC, and ICANN generally, discussions continue on this topic.

⁵⁸ See <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/two-character-ltr-ltr-authorization-release-13dec16-en.pdf>.

⁵⁹ See <https://forum.icann.org/lists/comments-proposed-measures-two-char-08jul16/pdfvt13ZDkPrS.pdf>.