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Wine Origins Alliance Submission to WIPO Re: UDRP Scope and Wine Place Name Protection

The Wine Origins Alliance (WOA) was founded in 2005 by eight distinctive wine regions from around the world that signed the [Joint Declaration to Protect Wine Place & Origin](#), establishing principles aimed at educating consumers and policymakers about the importance of wine place name protection. Today, we have grown into a global coalition of 34 members across 9 countries spanning North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, encompassing more than 100,000 wineries.

Wine is the ultimate product of place. Characteristics such as terroir, climate, and generations of winemaking traditions help make each region's wines unique. Within all WOA regions, many of our members represent micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), often multi-generational, family-owned businesses firmly rooted in their land and terroir. These are businesses and people proud of their heritage and products, who compete on quality and the recognition of their regional names.

Regrettably, their product names and wine place names around the globe are being increasingly misused online, including through abusive domain name registration. Like brand names, renowned place names play an essential role in building consumer confidence and recognition, rewarding producers and communities that have invested in these names, thereby enabling sustainable business operations.

Among these wine place names, geographical indications (GIs) naturally hold a particular position. Geographical indications are internationally recognized intellectual property rights, protected by multilateral, regional, and national legal frameworks. Specifically, they benefit from legal protection under the WTO TRIPS Agreement (Articles 22-24) and constitute the core of the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, administered by WIPO. Wines account for nearly one-third of the GIs and appellations of origin registered in the WIPO Lisbon system. Additionally, the EU and US concluded a Wine Trade Agreement in 2006 that provides for mutual recognition of certain wine names of origin. This international recognition of wine place names and GIs warrants careful consideration in further proceedings.

More broadly, the growing misuse of renowned place names online requires an effective mechanism to dispute, halt, and correct such practices. Unfortunately, currently available avenues are resource-intensive and lengthy, inadvertently incentivizing misleading and harmful practices.

With the rapid growth of e-commerce, the risk of abuse and misappropriation of place names online increases significantly. Domain names that misuse GI terms can easily mislead consumers, harm legitimate producers, and damage the economic value and reputation of GIs. Given the experience with past reviews and the time required to implement changes, the ICANN Phase 2 Review represents a unique opportunity to update the system—there is unlikely to be another such opportunity in the foreseeable future.

WOA supports the UDRP's role as a unique avenue to address this shortcoming. We were surprised to read that the initial report of the WIPO-ICANN UDRP Review Project Team actively recommends against expanding the scope of the UDRP.

We view WIPO's negative recommendation as an unfortunate signal regarding integration and inclusion, essentially preventing meaningful engagement between the GI and ICANN communities—a process that has been called for and encouraged by various stakeholders.

We therefore respectfully suggest that the WIPO-ICANN project team amend its recommendation on the scope of the UDRP and invite ICANN Phase 2 to consider, as part of its initial work charter, the expansion of the UDRP's scope.

Additionally, we support an inclusive process that would involve the identified stakeholders involved in place name protection and geographical indications, like producers, relevant public authorities, and specifically concerned international alliances and organizations.

Accordingly, WOA stands ready to work with WIPO, ICANN, and other interested parties to ensure that all forms of intellectual property relevant to wine place name protection benefit from a fair, modern enforcement system well-adapted to the specificity of our global context.