NRO document presented to the WGIG during its 4th open consultation meeting

NRO Statement on Internet Governance

14 June 2005

This statement is made by the Number Resource Organisation (NRO), representing the 5 Regional Internet Registries, and pertains to the question of Internet technical coordination, one of the key topics of the recent Internet Governance discussions.

The NRO has been supportive of the ICANN model as the most appropriate one to support the further growth and evolution of the Internet. The principle characteristics of this model are those of a lightweight technical coordination function, maximum delegation of responsibility to independent bodies, and the inclusion of the broad spectrum of stakeholders in the overall process. This model has proven well suited to the evolving structure of a global communications community with a significant private sector component, while maintaining openness to civil society and public sector interests.

The NRO has also supported ICANN in its efforts to embrace these principles and characteristics, and has supported the continuing evolution of ICANN's structure in order to better fulfil its role. Further change is required for ICANN to meet the evolving global agenda of the Internet, particularly as it relates to the various aspects of the information society.

The NRO believes that the continuing evolution of the Internet coordination function should include consideration of the following topics.

1. As stated in its bylaws, ICANN's mission "is to coordinate, at the overall level, the global Internet's systems of unique identifiers". In addition to this coordination function, ICANN is currently contracted to operate the IANA function, responsible for the administration of DNS top-level domains, the allocation of IP number resources, and the assignment of protocol numbers. While these activities have historically been performed by a single body, we find that in ICANN's case, an imbalance has emerged whereby specific DNS-related activities have absorbed the vast majority of the organisation's attention and resources. It is appropriate at this juncture to consider the diversity of ICANN's activities, and the organizational structure that is best suited to its entire range of responsibilities. While an overall coordination role is certainly needed, further delegation of specific activities would allow for increased levels of specialized expertise to support the various roles in a more efficient and balanced manner.

2. Public sector participation in ICANN, particularly as expressed through the Government Advisory Committee, has clearly not operated to the satisfaction of all parties. The NRO is supportive of further refinements that could meet the needs of national governments for more meaningful participation in the activities of ICANN. The NRO notes that the Internet is sustained by significant investments by both the private and public sectors. This investment needs to extend beyond the public-private partnership, and that this diversity should be reflected in the multi-stakeholder coordination process. We have noted the April 2005 European Union proposal to WGIG in this regard and consider such initiatives to be well-founded.

3. In the interests of equity, Internet technical coordination activities need to be independent of government, and utilize participation models that incorporate and reflect the diverse set of interested parties along the dimensions of activity sectors, international alignments, geography, and language. While aspects of the current model achieve this in certain cases (most particularly in the case of RIRs themselves), there needs to be a greater focus of effort in this area.

4. The function of address distribution has operated within a framework of self-regulation for a considerable time, and enjoys significant community, industry and government support. While we recognize some areas of concern by segments of the global community, we caution strongly against precipitous changes in the system, such as the proposed introduction of new "parallel" systems for management of IPv6 addresses. This is an activity with considerable interdependency in technology, business models of supply of Internet services, and consumer demand for those services. In contemplating any changes to the current system the NRO advocates a thorough investigation of the technical implications of any such changes on the global operating characteristics of the Internet. We fully recognise the voiced concerns regarding the historical distribution of IPv4 address space and are now, and have been, discussing the implementation of mechanisms to ensure fair distribution and adequate supply of IPv6 address space to Internet users throughout the planet.

Finally, the NRO does not see it as appropriate to view ICANN as a controlling body, a source of international regulation of the Internet, or a means of enforcing regulatory provisions. The basic expectation of ICANN is as a technical coordination forum, wherein various activities relating to infrastructure administration can be considered, needs can be identified, and broad common objectives can be phrased in order to guide further activities in both the private and public sectors. In this regard ICANN has enjoyed reasonable success, but it is now time to take further steps that would engender further broad confidence in this model. However, if one or more new entities are considered then it is essential to consider how such additional bodies could and would provide more effective coordination of activity within the existing roles in the organizations that currently exist.

About the Number Resource Organization (NRO)

Formed by the Regional Internet Registries in 2003, the NRO acts as the coordinating mechanism on matters relating to their mutual interests. The NRO exists to protect the unallocated number resource pool, to promote and protect the bottom-up policy development process, and to act as a focal point for Internet community input into the RIR system.

Its members are: AfriNIC, serving the African continent, APNIC, serving the Asia-Pacific region; ARIN, serving North America, portions of the Caribbean; LACNIC, serving Latin America and portions of the Caribbean; and RIPE NCC, serving Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

More information about the NRO is available at:
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