AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ALAC Statement

On the Interim Report of Geographic Regions WG

Introduction
By the Staff of ICANN

The attached Statement constitutes the official response of the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) on the recent public consultation on the Interim Report of Geographic Regions Review Working Group. The Statement was initially drafted by Mohamed El Bashir, member of the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC), on 26 January 2011.

The Statement was sent to the ALAC Working list for comments on 26 January. No additional comments were received.

The Appendix to the Statement consists of the contributions from the five At-Large Regional At-Large Organizations (RALOs). The comments reflect the actively discussed views of the RALOs with their diverse historical, linguistic, cultural and geographic differences.

On 30 January 2011, the Chair of the ALAC asked the Staff to start a five-day online vote on the ALAC Statement on the Interim Report of the Geographic Regions Review Working Group beginning 31 January 2011.

The vote resulted in the ALAC endorsing the Statement with 13-0 votes and no abstentions. You may review the result independently under:
https://www.bigpulse.com/pollresults?code=1549IurTvFzFztCDWPZQyGrW

The enclosed Statement was submitted by email to the Geographic Regions Review Working Group on 30 January 2011. It was also submitted to the ICANN Board of Directors on 7 February.

[End of Introduction]

ALAC Statement on the Interim Report of the Geographic Regions Review Working Group

The At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) appreciates the excellent work done by the Geographic Regions Review Working Group. The interim report covers the legacy background information and raises important questions related to the current ICANN region structure.

The At-Large current structure, including the Regional At-Large Organizations (RALOs), which is based on ICANN's five geographical regions, consist of 129 At-Large Structure (ALS) members representing internet users around the world. We believe it is a good example that achieves diversity and representation in using the current ICANN regional structure. The ALSes represent vastly diverse language, ethnic, technical interests within the same region. We are satisfied with the current ICANN regions structure.

We are, however, concerned regarding proposals to introduce new ICANN regions or splitting the current regions which will severely affect and fragment the current At-Large structure, this concern is also raised by AFRALO in its regional statement in response to the interim report.

We understand and acknowledge legitimate requests and issues raised related to the current ICANN regions. This is specifically the issue of the islands nations geographical split between more than one region based on geography and administrative/legal reasons and the status of some Eastern countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan whom according to ICANN regions are part of Asia Pacific region while in other international fora they are members of the European region.

As the demography of internet users is changing and millions of new internet users are joining the internet from emerging or developing countries, the Geographic Regions Working Group Interim Report recommendations should encourage ICANN constituencies (AC/SOs) to review their current membership frameworks to address issues of under-representation of those regions and encourage more active participation from the least represented or active geographical regions.

With specific reference to the Interim Report question on how to ensure cultural diversity, the ALAC encourages the AC/SOs to seek membership of organizations/entities to represent more cultural and linguistic diversity. Value could be added to the ICANN policy development process and each AC/SO could employ tailored procedures to ensure diversity among its members.

ALAC recommends the Geographic Regions Working Group to recommend a regular review of ICANN regions framework every five years review, the review should focus in assessing ICANN regions impact on the issues representation and participation within ICANN AC/SOs.

As with the wide diversity that exists within and between the five At-Large RALOs, including historical, linguistic, cultural and geographic differences, there is also a diversity of perspectives on the issues raised in the Interim Report of the Geographic Regions Working Group. This diversity is evident in the contributions from the RALOs set out in the Appendix to this Statement.

Appendix

AFRALO

AFRALO Statement on ICANN Geographic Regions

We, AFRALO members appreciate the work done by the geographic regions review working group and the key questions raised during this exercise, AFRALO would like to express it has no objection to the current ICANN geographic region structure and distribution, we think that the current ICANN regions fit its purposes.

Africa is a region fighting for unity to promote economic and social development. As such, AFRALO members think any division of the African continent would jeopardize the efforts deployed to realize this objective. History has divided the continent by language and the actual efforts are for reunification.

AFRALO recommends ICANN to keep the integrity of the African continent as such with all its countries as actually recognized by the United Nations. With its 54 countries and its cultural diversity (multiple languages, different types of populations, high demography, different political systems, variety of climates and vegetations, etc.) Africa, by itself, is a complex community model in which the members learn to respectfully communicate and live together, in harmony. For equity reasons, AFRALO recommends that ICANN finds mechanisms to provide due representation actors to each continent according to the respective number of countries, regardless of the number of languages.

APRALO

APRALO is submitting the following statements on three separate issues.
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Small Island cross-regional At-Large organisation
The attached submission is by the Vice Chair of PICISOC Maureen Hilyard which outlines the reasoning for the development of a Small Island Developing States (SIDS) grouping within ICANN's At-large structure.
-- Will Tibben

West Asia/Middle East sub-region or separate region
There is a certain amount of overhead agreement required to go this way. If we can agree to making sub-groups under APRALO for the SIDS and the Arab Region AR, under APRALO

facilitate them to appoint their structure/leadership/operating articles, there would be speed for this under ALAC and of course APRALO instead of putting this through a much longer process at the ICANN level. This is sort of a short-cut suggestion.

Within this proposal suggestion that will be an APRALO proposal to ALAC and should ALAC approve it, APRALO can appoint two sub-regions APRALO-SIDS and APRALO-AR. Both the sub-groups can have then their own leadership out of which the Chair or President or Director (any form they choose to be suitable for them) will be present in APRALO to have issues and processes moved up, presented and completed. The sub-groups can have their own secretariats and participate with the ALAC RALO Secretariats' without the need to go through APRALO for this process.

SIDS and AR can also have their showcases under APRALO. APRALO within this model would give equal weight to concerns and issues from these sub-regions and move them forward to ALAC.

I put a lot of thought into this and this proposal seems to be very workable without the need to shake anything upwards. It also reduces the time required to get such an idea moving forward. However, I have not been able to draw out how APRALO's budget would be affected this way because we will need budget for getting at least 4 new members to ICANN meetings etc. This is a touchy issue and I don't have the experience to deal with this at this point in time and will require some expert guidance in the event the above proposal is worth a consideration.

-- Fouad Bajwa

I haven't paid enough attention to the Geo wg... but I wonder if there is room for sub-regions.
One of the implications of geo regions is of course the distribution of e.g. board members and other aspects in the policy development and decision making processes... sub-regions may allow us to further develop the framework...

-- Edmon Chung

Central Asia merging with Europe

This is a very interesting topic related to my own case. Within the framework of ICANN Geo. regions Republic of Armenia is in Asia Pacific. Within the framework of many other structures Armenia is within Europe, just as an example given from the PPt (**Geographic Regions Review Workshop Cartagena**)**,** according to "International Norms, Armenia for within UN structure is considered as "Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States, ITU council uses Armenia within "Eastern Europe and Northern Asia", ITU (BDT) uses Armenia within "The Commonwealth of Independent States". This brings a lot of confusion for me as a representative of Armenia. Currently there are discussions on this topic within ALAC community, and I volunteered to participate in the discussions of both in EURALO and APRALO in order to understand what kind of changes, discussions are taking place and where Armenia is considered to be in accordance to these group discussions. The easiest way will be the identification of Armenia within Europe, as Armenia is a member of United Nations since March 2, 1992, Armenia is a member of Council of Europe since January 25, 2001. Currently Armenia works towards becoming a member of the European

Union. Armenia is a member of the European ccNSO. Thus, my suggestion is to identify Armenia within Europe, not within Asia Pacific also within ICANN framework. -- Siranush Vardanyan

EURALO

EURALO input to the on-going ICANN consultation process on the Interim Report of the Geographic Regions Review WG.

EURALO was following the discussion on ICANN's geographic regions on the ALAC and cross-community level with interest and created its own thematic Working Group recently to discuss the Interim Report of the Review WG and its significance from a European regional perspective.

First of all, we would like to appreciate the excellent work done by the geographic regions Review WG and the key questions raised during this exercise. There was agreement from the European WG members to reaffirm the existing ICANN regional model and not to argue for any extension for more regions.

1. However, when we were looking at the key references for the definition of the existing ICANN regions we found out that most of them are UN-based and applied by the UN system. The UN references are predominant and make sense for many parts of the world but they do not necessarily reflect the extraordinary diversity of (ICANN) regions like Asia-Pacific and Europe. From a European point of view and perspective, the standards and definitions set by the Council of Europe (CoE) are broadly relevant, accepted and important. And many countries are part of Europe and its regional definition – according to CoE standards – which are situated in the East – see:

   http://www.ena.lu/member_states_european_organisations_2008-021000009.html
   Some of these countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan or Georgia are members of the CoE but considered in other classification models (incl. ICANN) as part of the Asian region. We therefore suggest that the definitions and classifications by the Council of Europe are taken into consideration as well in the ICANN context.

2. In recent years, EURALO had some discussions with people from Eastern countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan who expresses strong interest in joining and participating in our RALO, arguing that they have a stronger affinity to Europe than to the Asian region (for historical, cultural etc. reasons). We always had to reassure them that they "formally" and, according to ICANN definitions, are part of APRALO. When we were arguing before to maintain the existing regional model at ICANN as a *general rule*, we would like to suggest some considerations on *exceptional* or *border* cases and to introduce a new "principle of self-determination" for such particular border cases. We are conscious that exceptions always need to be well justified to avoid abuses. And such a "principle of self-determination" needs to be further discussed and specified on particular circumstances, procedures of consultations, mutual approval and decision- making. In the given example of Armenia or Azerbaijan, a consultation process with the regions concerned (APRALO and EURALO) would be indispensable. And a decision on any exceptional application could be

taken with the approval by both RALOs concerned only (sort of [mutual](#) [recognition](#) [procedure](#) – MRP). We are aware that there is always a justified fear of undesired precedence involved, but such a "principle of self-determination" is recognised in international law as well.

3. To further discuss our suggestions, EURALO proposes to convene and organise a joint ALAC meeting at the next ICANN conference in San Francisco (March 11) to find some common grounds with our colleagues from APRALO (and other RALO members interested) and to develop further specifications in this direction.

We are convinced, if we want to encourage a broader bottom-up participation and inclusion of more Internet users at ICANN, we need to create conditions for participation reflecting the cultural particularities and sensitivities of motivated people and potential ALSes.

Neuchâtel/Switzerland, January 11

Wolf Ludwig -- on behalf of EURALO

LACRALO

Regional Position

A general consensus around the concepts and points of the Draft. Regarding the possibility of dividing a region, it stands out the importance of keeping particularly the point 110 of the Draft.

Caribbean ALSes comments

The defined geographic region of LACRALO has in the past detracted from ICANN's goal of reflecting the functional, geographic and cultural diversity of the Caribbean Region of Internet end-users. This is felt at a basic level via participation on the mailing list and voicing opinions on matters; as well as relating to larger issues, such as policy development and voting of ALAC (and other) representatives.

ICANN's Core Values We recognise the Initial Report identified representation, participation and operations as three primary usage categories. Traditionally the Caribbean region has been under represented and little involution has been made to encourage and increase participation. The argument for greater input from the Caribbean region is strengthened by the addition of the concepts of "cultural diversity" and "geographic diversity" to the ICANN Bylaws in 2002; the Caribbean being a unique segment of LACRALO in both these categories and deserving of such recognition. Indeed ICANN, the corporation, has since 2006 employed and tasked an employee to be the Caribbean liaison.

In our view, the mechanism by which ICANN's core values are applied to RALOs is ill-defined, but we can apply the guidelines of the bylaws which state:

"Seeking and supporting broad, informed participation reflecting the functional, geographic, and cultural diversity of the Internet at all levels of policy development and decision-making." --Fourth Core Value; and Also while Article XI, Section 2, Paragraph 4 which deals with ALAC representatives is silent on this point; we can also apply guidance to enshrine

ICANN's Core Values from: "…composed of members that in the aggregate display diversity in geography, culture, skills, experience, and perspective…" --Article VI Section 2

Diversity

We agree in the broader recognition of "diversity" to include additional considerations of culture and language in the LACRALO. The Caribbean is distinct in terms of its history, culture and language; further it has indigenous challenges being small island states and specific needs which are not a natural fit with the rest of Latin America. Due to these differences LACRALO is able to benefit from varying opinions and has the potential to be a truly representative region. One small but important example is the predominant use of English language in the Caribbean Region, however 90% of the mailing list discussion takes place in Spanish. With poor translation tools and the particular nuances between languages; we struggle to understand each other and it becomes almost prohibitively difficult to communicate, follow topic threads collaborate and participate fully. Interpretation between our two regions is currently poor and the result is misunderstanding, frustration, duplicated effort and ultimately lack of participation from our Region; thereby resulting in under-representation of our particular perspectives and points of view.

Numbers of Internet users

We agree that the only measure of "balance" should not be limited to the number of internet users in a particular sub-region of LACRALO. Balance must tie into and promote diversity. This will only occur if it includes the stakeholder groups in various communities of interest having clear view-points on ICANN's issues. Often, because of our diversity we see two clear perspectives emerging on issues- on one side from the Latin American Region and on the other from the Caribbean Region. However, since the Caribbean is always in the minority (both in terms of numbers of ALSes and users) our votes, our participation and our opinions have little impact unless an 'arrangement' is forged with Latin American representatives in order to push a particular motion (on our behalf). This is crippling to the Caribbean region's presence in LACRALO on several levels:

1. It diminishes participation of our members, due to lack of morale when our perspective is ignored without any consideration and also due to the level of bureaucracy involved in contributing; and

2. It increases the challenge to recruit new members and ALSes because of this sense of pseudo-involvement, marginalism and non-engagement. As it stands, on many occasions the Caribbean voice in LACRALO is indirectly but effectively diminished.

Those not represented

We have not had any input from the Caribbean end-user groups in Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guyana, Curacao, Bonaire, Aruba, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands or British Virgin Islands with regard to their issues with being aligned to their mother country. But we encourage that their opinion be sought out by the Working Group.

Striking Balance

We have clearly identified these areas as opportunities to create balance and build a more united LACRALO, and are supportive of the GNSO Principle on Potential Change of Regions (August 2008) which states that "ICANN regions should seek to balance three goals: diversity of representation, ease of participation, and simplicity" and such simplicity "should be balanced with the evolving needs of ICANN's supporting organisations and other bodies."

A Path Forward
Today the "C" in LACRALO means "CROSSROADS".

There are several options:

1. Stay

We recognise that as a while we do have two different perspectives on many matters, LACRALO as a whole is poised to become stronger and more inclusive by recognising, reviewing and where possible representing both views. In the Caribbean we perceive our differences as strengths, which give us two separate but equally important vantage points to appreciate the whole. As such, we consider that the Latin American Region not only gains from our perspective in conformance with ICANN's Core Values, but also benefits by our native and dexterous use of English in reading, discussing, presenting arguments and written contribution on behalf of the entire region of LACRALO. At times, we have not felt willingness by our partners to look beyond their blinkers but we are hopeful that they will recognise the importance of building a framework of balance, not only in light of the above but to create unity and cohesion in LACRALO. In order to encourage this step and in consideration of the diversity of representation, ease of participation, and simplicity goals highlighted above, we have proposed a LACRALO Bylaw modification, such that one of the LACRALO Representatives to ALAC come from the Caribbean Region. This remains our preferred option.

2. Seek alignment with NARALO

While we have to go back a few centuries to find commonality in our histories, both NARALO and the Caribbean Region share the same language and akin perspectives on many areas, including our view of democracy. These positives give a strong impression that the Caribbean may find a better fit with NARALO in order to contribute and represent. We are fully aware that it is near impossible to find perfect alignment as the Caribbean region has a clear identity and there will always be distinct aspect of our perspective. In this respect the Caribbean region will only add to the diversity and widen the viewpoint of whichever RALO it belongs to; what is crucial is that value be given to that view when it is expressed.

3. New "Small Island Developing State" RALO (SIDSRALO)

We recognise that adding a new region to the existing geographic regional framework results in increased costs for ICANN and perhaps reduced net budget for each RALO. Despite this cost issue, we recognise that the Core Values must prevail and there is merit in having a new grouping specific to the needs of Small Island Developing States like ours. Many of the

smaller islands in our region are not represented because of limited resources and we agree that ICANN's structures and processes should lower barriers for participation and engagement by community members as much as practicable. By forming this new grouping we can leverage on our collective skills to support smaller members not only in the Caribbean but globally, who will have almost identical issues. Perhaps the main drawback with a SIDS RALO would be that we would be geographically dispersed and have to travel long distances for face to face meetings such as a General Assembly.

4. Hybrid

This is a mix of option 1 or 2 with the additional support of forming a special interest group by small Islands or similar culture groupings. This is a mechanism of gaining the benefits of both worlds and would facilitate that our voices are represented in both ways. However, this would require additional funding to facilitate representation at meetings, calls, working groups etc. of the particular special interest group.

Closing Points

The Caribbean ALSes consider that the Interim Report of the Geographic Regions Working Group documents the existing situation, highlights the issues arising and connects these to ICANN's Core Values. We however feel that there must be a much firmer embrace of ICANN Core values in terms of balance, representation, participation. Notwithstanding the differences and issues that exist, the Caribbean has a deep level of fidelity and attachment, and we wish to work and function as an equal partner in LACRALO. In this statement we have highlighted options to provide balanced contributions and acknowledge that the simplest of these can be realised in the immediate sense with a few adjustments to LACRALO Charter.

We laud the Working Group, specifically with regard to identifying and detailing the specific needs of Small Island Developing States and will readily endorse such grouping in whatever form. We hope that this step forward is not negated by issues of funding, as the underlying aim of this assessment is to encourage ICANN's Core Values. We must always seek out, cherish and ensure effective representation.

NARALO

NARALO finds that the current situation in this region is satisfactory but encourages the work of other At-Large regions in which the current system may be seen to require change.

We also support investigating ways to increase the participation of Indigenous populations, especially those whose cultural territory cuts across regional boundaries. However, we would strongly oppose any regional model (such as the ITU) that would amalgamate all of the Western Hemisphere into a single "Americas" region.