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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information

Ref.: CI/KSD/UAP/2011/IKB/382

30 September 2011

Dear members of the study group,

Subject: UNESCO comments for a study group on the use of country and territory names as TLDs

With reference to the UNESCO and ICANN Partnership Agreement to cooperate on the internationalization of the Internet, specifically on providing the comments for a study group on the use of names for countries and territories as top-level domains (TLDs), I am pleased to convey the preliminary views (in Annex) provided by the members of the Intersectoral Working Group on Languages of UNESCO for your kind attention. This working group is composed of the staff members working on the language-related issues at UNESCO.

The preliminary views were provided based on the background documents transmitted by ICANN to UNESCO on 6 September 2011 and should be treated as an expert view rather than UNESCO official position.

UNESCO is willing to continue cooperating with ICANN on the issues related to the internationalization of the Internet, including the further work of the working group on the use of country and territory names as TLDs.

Should you require more information, please do not hesitate to contact my colleague Ms Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg (i.kasinskaite@unesco.org) from the Knowledge Societies Division of our Sector.

Sincerely yours,

Jānis Kārklīšs



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ANNEX

1. A typology for country and territory names as TLDs and examples proposed by the working group provides an insight into a well-defined typology and presents a diverse range of issues that need to be addressed when dealing with country and territory names. The explicit example of the country name (The Netherlands) is a very useful illustration of the complexity of the issue and helps to define other cases. The preliminary views are outlined below.
2. Referring to the **ISO 3166-1 standard** (alpha-2 codes), it would be useful to collaborate with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and verify how to approach the country and territory names which currently have other short versions/abbreviations and in some cases could be misleading. In those cases, the addition of a separate type of country or territory names in the table would be advisable entitled "Short country/territory name - acronym/abbreviation" (not foreseen or included by the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes standard). For example, a country name "United States of America" is articulated as ".us" by the standard mentioned above, however, a shorter version such as "usa" is frequently used and could be misleading.
3. **Official name.** It is would advisable to modify the title and provide more options for the pre-selection:
 - a. Official name(s). It is recommended to add more than one country/territory name which could be written in more than one official language of that country. For example, South Africa has eleven official languages and scores of unofficial ones. In cases where there are more than one official language, it will be difficult to collect appropriate data having only one official country name in one official language. In many cases, countries may have more than one official language and more than one country/territory name written in more than one official language.
 - b. In some instances, the official country/territory name could be the same as a country/territory name written in a minority or indigenous language recognized as an official language in the country/territory. In those cases, it is important to capture those linguistic similarities and specificities.
 - c. It would useful to add another type of the country/territory name entitled "Country/territory name in non-officially recognized languages of the country". However, this may increase the scope of the project by adding a long list of country/territory names written in non-officially recognized languages.
4. A type "**Primary name**" requires additional clarification, such as how it is defined, by whom, which historical period.



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5. **Simplex name.** It is important to define or reflect from the beginning which national institution or representative will be responsible for confirming that a specific simplex name is in use by a majority of the population of the country/territory in question. In addition, the same type could also be linked to the type proposed as "Short country/territory name - acronym/abbreviation" (Reference to Article 3 (c)).
6. **Name in United Nations (UN) languages.** It is not clear whether the country/territory names will be provided in all languages of the UN Member States (currently 193) or in the six major UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic). If the working group aims to obtain all country/territory names in all UN Member States languages (the official six cited above), it is advisable to modify the table as proposed in Article 3 (a).
7. **Historical name.** It is advisable to define a clear period when referring to the historical name. It is also recommended to include "Historical name in use" meaning that a country/territory name is currently in use or was in use during the last 50 or 100 years. It is important to stress that this type of country name/territory without clear periodization may have serious political implications. For example, UN officially uses the country name "Republic of the Union of Myanmar", however, the country name "Burma" was in use until recently. Therefore, it is important to define which national institution will be responsible to provide information and which historical period should be used to define the historical name. For example, the country historical or ancient names such as "Britannia" for Great Britain, "Russ" for Russian Federation or "Gallo" for France are still in use despite their historical origins and specific period (longer than 100 years ago). One of the long-term solutions would be to establish a list of country names/territories indicating of the different historical periods.
8. **Local country name.** This type of country/territory name deserves some clarification, as it is not clear to which geographical location and to which historical period it refers. It is also questionable how the local country/territory name will be defined in terms of regional, sub-regional and national aspects. This type may also raise some politically sensitive issues.
9. **Minority name(s)** could be modified as "Name in minority language(s)". This type is closely linked to the types such as "Official name" meaning the country/territory name in official languages, including those which are officially recognized, but represent a minority in the country/territory. In some instances, the name in minority languages could be a name of the country/territory in a minority language which is not officially recognized. In some other instances, the minority name could be also linked or interchangeable with a name of the country/territory in indigenous languages. It is also important to specify which institution, including minority representatives, will be responsible for providing a name of the country/territory in minority languages, especially in cases where minority languages are not recognized officially.



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10. **Indigenous name(s)**. A name of the country/territory in indigenous languages could be in some instances a politically and culturally sensitive. Some indigenous languages are official while others are minority or not recognized as official languages. It is therefore an issue related to the self-recognition and self-determination of a special linguistic community. For example, the country name “New Zealand” in indigenous language of Maori has different. It is strongly advisable to include the name(s) of the country/territory in indigenous languages in this process. At the UN level, the issues related to the indigenous languages are widely discussed, however there is no list of languages used by indigenous peoples.

11. **Exonym(s)**. The type needs to be better defined in the glossary as it is not clear to what it refers. For example, the names used in all UN Member States languages (officially recognized) or including other languages not recognized as official languages. It would be advisable to contact official national institutions responsible for the language policies and representatives of the minority or indigenous communities.

12. Finally, it is recommended to carry out a pilot project and establish a first list of the country names taking into consideration the data received from at least 20 countries. The pilot phase would allow to identify other possible types of country names, as well as to establish a proper data collection mechanism.