

**ASO CONTRIBUTION TO THE WGIG OPEN CONSULTATION MEETING  
(Presented by Lee Howard on behalf of the ASO Address Council)**

14 June 2005

I want to thank the members of the Working Group on Internet Governance for their diligent work so far. Based on the summary of WGIG Member Responses to the recent questionnaire, there seems to be consensus for a new organization. There is not yet consensus on the form or role of this organization, and the ASO AC would like to offer suggestions for its functions relating to Internet addressing. These suggestions are consistent with the Working Group's own findings in the Cluster One B3 Assessment Report.

The Cluster 1B Assessment Report on issues relating to Internet numbers found five areas for improvement. If a new organization is needed, one assumes it would be to improve on the areas identifies as needing improvement. The ASO AC has discussed these areas, and we believe only one of those goals might be served under a new organization.

The Working Group reports that one area for improvement is the "Full use of the IPv4 space." As of April 2005, just under 30% of IPv4 space remains. Continued stewardship will extend the life of this space until IPv6 has been universally adopted. If the current space is fully used before the universal support and adoption of IPv6, growth on the Internet will be ended. Any alternative model of allocation which intends to use all of the IPv4 address space would clearly intend to halt the growth of the Internet. This is generally accepted to be bad. A new organization would not help.

The Assessment Report identified the "Sustainable transformation of the IP addressing and numbering system to IPv6" as an area for improvement. Allocation policy for IPv6 is among the top priorities of the RIRs, working with the IETF as policies and protocols are developed between them. Ensuring a long life for IPv6, while preserving the essential routing functionality of the Internet, is a key technical consideration during these deliberations. Irresponsible competitive allocation schemes would hurt the sustainability of the system. Depleting the IPv4 space will disrupt the transition. There does not seem to be a use for a new organization here, or for a reorganization of the existing systems.

The Report finds that the RIRs need to provide policies in more languages. The RIRs and ICANN have already identified the need for access in more languages, and are each assessing the need for each language in their regions. LACNIC, for instance, currently provides documents in the three major languages served in its region. AfriNIC's complete web site is available in two languages. ICANN's strategic plan identifies the need to provide documents in more languages. A new organization for the purpose of providing technical translations seems ponderous.

The Cluster 1B Report suggests that we can improve on the "equitable distribution of IP addresses." This is interesting, because "equitable" can be construed in several ways.

"Equitable" might mean "to each according to his need." As offered in the report, there has never been a case of a documented need for addresses being denied. Good documentation is required for accountability, so if the need can be documented, address space is allocated. This is

true regardless of the region or the entity applying. The RIR evaluates that need according to published policies, which are applied the same to everyone who applies.

“Equitable” could mean “consistent with the principle of stewardship to promote stability and longevity.” This is why policies change, because the needs of the Internet change. Twenty years ago, the protocol only had three sizes of blocks, known as Class A, Class B, and Class C. Now, we have CIDR, assignment windows, and the HD Ratio. Policy has always been applied democratically, under the policy in place at the time. The public in each region sets these policies with an awareness of the needs of the future.

Or maybe “equitable” could mean “in accordance with community-developed policies, consistently applied.” One of the most important features of the RIRs is that the public creates policy. The RIRs do not set policy. The members do not set policy. Policy is written by the public, reviewed by the public, and ultimately set by anyone who participates on the mailing lists or at the meetings. The staff and board of the RIRs themselves only judge the consensus; since the complete conversation is open to the public, the transparency is perfect.

All of these principles are fulfilled by the RIRs.

There is, however, one area for improvement offered in the Cluster 1B Assessment Report that might be aided by another organization. That is the “clarification of the role of national governments in the policies for the allocation of IP addresses.” It is fair to say that some governments and civil society organizations feel insufficiently involved in the process of developing policies for Internet addressing, and for whatever reason generally don’t participate in the existing processes.

As you conceive this forum, however, keep clear in mind that “allocation policy” is not the same thing as “public policy.” Governments must set public policy, to protect their citizens. Different nations understand that protection differently, as in industry competition or public utilities, privacy or transparency, free speech or objectionable content. These are not the questions the addressing community considers. Those of us who participate in the policy process are concerned foremost with allocating address space to whoever can show they need it, and protecting the future of the Internet.

Some people have suggested address allocation under national authorities. Some of these people already have national registries, like those in China, Korea, and Brazil. We don’t know what different authorities would do differently. While considering the stability of the Internet, including the size of routing tables, and the intent to grow, maybe some of these people would propose alternative allocation policies, which could then be considered by the public in each region. We invite and welcome proposals, and suggest that unless the current process is broken, it should not be fixed.

The ASO AC does not object to the formation of a forum of some kind, with a purpose of discussing public policy issues among governments and civil society. Where these public policy concerns indicate a need for allocation policy review, we welcome and encourage proposals. Please.

Where this forum is conceived as having oversight authority is too much, however. Governments suggest that they have the mandate of their citizens, but the RIRs offer the direct participation of individuals. Arguments that ICANN has weaknesses miss the basic point that ICANN doesn't allocate address space: the RIRs do, according to publicly developed policies. Perhaps more than any other structure, the RIRs embody democratic principles, allowing participation by anyone. Creation of a new policy body, with authority to supersede existing organizations, would disenfranchise those individual experts who have chosen to participate in the construction of the existing Internet.