

PANAMA - Joint Meeting: GAC and ccNSO (2 of 2)
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UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can we be seated, please. We are about to start the agenda item 27 on the schedule, the GAC joint meeting with GAC and the ccNSO. Please remember when called upon to state your name and affiliation.

BART BOSWINKEL: I am ccNSO support staff and giving this presentation on behalf of Jaap Akkerhuis. That's going to the first step, first disclaimer. The reason I'm doing this is Jaap is not attending this meeting. The second disclaimer, and that's Jaap's own disclaimer, is that the slides are his views and his views alone. Although he's a member of the ISO 3166 maintenance agency and liaison to working group 2, and I will explain later what these are, these are his personal views. So that's the second disclaimer.

So let's go into why this presentation. First of all, and that's the background of this, it's related very closely to RFC 1591, a policy document that goes back to 1994 about the delegation and transfer and [indiscernible] of ccTLD, this was the basic policy document. ISO 3166 enhances two-letter codes.

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And as part of say the discussion around the ccNSO around the retirement of ccTLDs because there is no policy in place, say the leadership thought it would be very useful to explain ISO 3166 itself in more detail. And as a result and because of that presentation and the discussions, the ccNSO and the GAC have and also the GAC and the ccNSO in the Work Track five, it was suggested to have this presentation to give it to you to provide you a basic understanding of one of the critical policy documents -- critical elements of the policy around country codes and what is in the ISO 3166.

One of the things to keep in mind is the dynamics of 3166. Although slowly, and I will keep repeating this and probably you are all aware of it, although slowly countries tend to go and are newly created, the list of countries 100 years ago was different than the list right now. The list of countries ten years ago is different than the list of countries right now. So although slowly, the list of countries and territories change and this has an impact in the discussions of.

And also another reason for doing this is the scope of ISO 3166 and what is important about it. So I've covered these, so first I will do a brief introduction on the ISO itself, the standards and how it works. ISO standards, and again, this is probably important, ISO standards are voluntary, meaning there is no reference that there needs to be an ISO standard, international

law treaty, anything else, people abide to these standards voluntarily, and they are developed to help in a consistent use of objects. This sounds very abstract. I will go into what the objects are and other parts of it. To promote say the exchange, interchange of goods, products, and ideas.

For example, there is an ISO standard around quality management where it provides a basis for communication. And say as a result it is used to reduce costs of exchanging, et cetera. That's a bit of the background of ISO standards in general. The ISO organization, also important to keep in the back of your mind, is a nongovernmental international membership organization. And the members, and they standardize a lot of things, technology, healthcare, food safety, business processes, all in all there are published at this moment in time between 21,000 and 22,000 standards and ISO 3166 is one of them. Only relevant in this context because you have some joint [indiscernible] committees, keep in mind a nongovernmental international organization, so that's the high level, and the members are standardization bodies from countries. So it's not governments or private companies. The members themselves are standardization members.

A little bit about the governance structure. You can see this as your leisure and on the website. There are technical committees and these develop the standards. So it's part of this whole

government's body and how they move forward, the technical committees they manage, the development of standards. So there are a few technical committees, and we will zoom in a little bit on technical committee 46 on information and documentation. And the reason we zoom in is, at the end of the day, ISO 3166 is under TC46, so technical committee 46, part of the all standardization efforts around information and documentation.

TC46, you can see the number of members, et cetera. There is one entity that I want -- or two I want to highlight from this slide, these are the Working Groups and the maintenance agency. And again, I will zoom in a little bit on Working Groups and maintenance agency. So ISO 3166, the coding of country names is done by Working Group 2 which is part of TC46. The working group is effectively, quote unquote, not in a legal sense but the owner of the standard. They make the substantial changes to the rules in the standard themselves, not the editorial changes but the standard rules, the real definitions in the standards. So it's working group 2, 25 members, and for your information, ICANN is a liaison to this working group, not a member. It doesn't vote or do anything, just there to pick up information on the developments and that's relevant to the ICANN working group. The changes need to be ratified by TC46, so a bit of

checks and balances, nothing can be done on its own. Remember, this is a nongovernmental body.

Maintenance agency, and you have heard a lot about it probably in your discussions with the cc, the ISO 3166 maintenance agency is the body that maintains the standard, meaning it makes the small editorial changes. It assigns the two-letter codes, et cetera. Effectively in Internet terms, and in ICANN terms, it is the registry for ISO 3166. So don't quote me on this one, but you can compare it a limit with the functions of pti [indiscernible] function operated, they maintain the registry, the database, the list of country and territory names and the two letter codes. They don't set rules or anything, they just act according to the rules to make the changes.

So ma3166, they maintain the contents and it saves lengthy change processes. For your reference and don't know if it's included, there is an online database where you can look up the changes and subscriptions are available.

I will focus on the ISO standards itself. Going back to the origin of 3166, 1974, there was an increasing urgent need for the universally applicable code for the representation of names of countries, and this was needed for international exchange of good and ideas. You need to have a standard way of

communicating. For example, as you will see, with shipping. Makes it easier to have a code that is universally accepted.

The way it was developed at the time, you can read it at your leisure, what is important to remember from this slide, and this goes back to the almost voluntary nature and the relevance of this standard and the need for this standard, you can see it was developed and elaborated with a lot of organizations, including some un related organizations. So it has a very broad range of -- applies to a very broad range of transactions, et cetera, again to keep in the back of your mind.

So that was a little bit about the background. Now focusing on ISO 3166 -- and this is probably a core slide of the whole presentation -- ISO 3166 consists of three parts. Part one, and this is where the ccTLD comes in or the ccNSO, it is country codes. And what is also important to remember, in part one, so around country codes, there will be alpha-2 and alpha-3 codes. It is the two letter and three letter codes. They are part of part one. So as soon as you start talking about part one country codes, you talk about two-letter codes and three letter codes. Both in part one.

Part two is about the subdivision of countries, provinces, subdivisions, and they have a different mechanism. I will focus on the country codes in part one and part three is effectively

historical registry, so it's the codes for formally used names of countries, it's an expensive lists, and these are four-letter codes.

Part one country codes. As I said, alpha-2 and alpha-3 codes, so two and three letter codes. And they are assigned together by, as you can see by the maintenance agency. As soon as a new entry needs included, a two-letter code is assigned and at the same time a three-letter code is assigned. If a code is removed from the list, which happens, the three-letter code will be removed from that list as well and leading is the two-letter code. The three-letter code will follow. As you can see, the same eligible entities, will go into a little more detail.

There are a lot of use cases of the two- and three-letter codes. I will list a few, I will share a slide with you with variations and additions, but other organizations, for example [indiscernible] International Olympic Committee, et cetera. Again, RFC 1591 mentions alpha-2 codes. So two-letter codes. Alpha-3 codes are not mentioned in RFC as such linking it to ISO 3166.

A little bit about part two. And I think this is important for some of your discussions. The subdivisions of country territory included in part one. So if there's an entity not included in part one and wants to submit a subdivision, it doesn't work, it will not be included in part two. So leading again is part one or is the country or territory listed in part one then it's eligible to list

subdivisions of the country and territory in part one, and this results in a couple of complications which I will not address but you can think about it.

Again, going back to ISO 3166 part one, what are the eligible entities? Who or which countries and territories are listed on ISO 3166 and why is it important? First of all, -- if there is a country recognized by the UN, it will be included in the ISO 3166 list and a two-letter code assigned by the maintenance issue.

Other areas of geopolitical interest, and you can think of some, they are added at the discretion of the maintenance agency, so no direct relationship with the UN members. And the subdivisions, et cetera, I will not go into.

Note, it is not necessary a geographic name included or if there is a geographic name, they are all, say the country and territory in the areas of geopolitical interest are all administrative areas, and this should ring a bell from a government or GAC point of view.

As I said, countries are included in the standard, solicited, that's the word, and effectively there are two things that are listed, the names and the codes. So a little more detail into the names and codes. The names of the country are taken from the UN terminology database, not made up by the maintenance agency. And one of the interesting things is that the names of the

countries and territories included are not stable either. Change -
- the names of countries do change more often than people think, and that will have an impact on say the rules around the delegation and retirement for example of ccTLDs. The codes that are assigned by the maintenance agency to the two letter codes should have some relation to the short name of a country and territory name.

And what is very important to understand, this is the English or French name of the country. Because at the end of the day, the standard is in English or in French, and the maintenance agency will use the French or English name to assign a code element, to the two letter codes, to these names. And there doesn't need to be a one-on-one relation.

As you can see on the slide, the alpha-2 codes effectively all the code elements starting with an S are almost exhausted. All the S'es are assigned. So if there would be a new country starting with an S, it would be hard to find a two letter code starting with an S. So that's one of the things why they're conservative in assigning codes. By definition the number of two-letter codes are limited.

And I cannot stress this enough, the code elements of the two-letter codes are assigned by the maintenance agency, that is by definition the role of the maintenance agency. Once a country is

eligible or country or territory eligible to be included, the maintenance agency will assign the two-letter codes, and it is at their discretion using the rule of visual standardization,.

As I said I would go a little bit into the background or purpose of ISO 3166. And this is -- yeah, it sounds very abstract so I will skip this slide. Where can you see alpha-2 codes used? First of all, in this environment of course you see it for country codes. So in the DNS, but it has an important role in travel documents. Travel documents or the electronically readable passports, they start with two-letter codes. Again, based on voluntary standards; to travel, official documents will start with two-letter codes. Two-letter codes are used in financial-related products, et cetera. They play a role in the currency code, in the international bank numbers, bit codes and international security numbers.

So you see the application is very broad and not just limited to the DNS. That's why it is so important to keep in the back of your mind, whatever we or you do as a community with the two-letter codes may have impact or collateral impact on other applications which are maybe just as important, like financial-related services, travel documents, other, credit cards, and they are used in trade-related codes like trade and transport locations, in postage distribution centers and interchange of --

(non-English language)

PLEASE STAND BY...

Codes come and go, code elements are added and removed from the standards. And the reason this can happen is there's a major name change. A good example is the name change from Zaire to Congo. The most well known one is probably Burma to Myanmar. And this is happening more often than you think. And sometimes a name change is so significant that it results -- needs to result in a change of code because there is absolutely no link anymore between the two-letter code and the name of the country in French or English.

Another reason why ISO 3166 changes over time is that countries merge, and probably the most famous case there is the merge of western and east Germany, resulted in a new entity and one was put on ISO. And countries do split. Probably the best example and the least contentious one is the split of Czechoslovakia in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. So one ceases to exist and there will need need to be new code assigned. And there is territory itself change in statehood. I am Dutch, I'm a subject of the kingdom of the Netherlands went through such a process,

Netherlands changed its statehood structure, [indiscernible] became more or less an independent territory, St. Maarten and the other one, Aruba was already one, and the other three parts of this became municipalities. And it had a direct impact on the ISO 3166, because as a result one code was removed and two -- three new ones were added. So you see that's a reason, and all of you will know some of the territories and countries that are still going over change processes, probably [indiscernible] is a good example and other regions will have other examples. So name change. These are the details you can look at them at your leisure.

A little bit on ISO 3166 Part 2, which is important to understand in this context. The role of -- again, the role of the maintenance agency with respect to subdivisions of countries of the entities in part one is very, very limited. It's just administrative. They do not assign anything. It is up to the -- say the administrative entities themselves or the authorities in countries of what is recruited or not included, they will not check or do anything. So there is no uniformity, nothing. And it's up to the countries themselves what they want to include and what they don't. And if you don't maintain it, you can think about it.

So the structure of the code, that's something else. This is an example where you can see when it becomes very messy, again, the slides are available just to have a look at at your leisure.

Some parts again important, as I said, the ISO 3166 standard is in French and in English. So countries that want to submit and especially countries or whether administrative language use as non Latin script, they need to Romanize the names to be included in the ISO 31,661 list. That is one. The same name for what is submitted say in the ISO Part 2 can appear for different entries, mean for different countries. Let's say you have Paris. You have Paris in Texas and as the capital of France, of course. And it also goes for very contested areas, which you can see are listed in the Part 2. It's difficult to keep duplicates, so the Part 2, although it's there it's not a useful and -- it's not as stable as the ISO 3166 part 1, maybe that's the best way to frame it.

So in summary -- and that's the end of the presentation -- ISO 3166 codes are used for various applications, not just the DNS. As you could see, it's used to denote currency, international trade, services. When you talk about ISO 3166 don't decide lightly on what is happening. ISO 3166 is dynamic, it follows the changes in areas of geopolitical interest. So although slowly, changes are happening, and that is what people tend to forget.

The code elements themselves, so the two-letter codes are assigned by the maintenance agency, and they have some rules to assign them, very lightweight rules, and the basis they use is the English or French name of a country. But then they still have flexibility in assigning the two-letter codes. Not done by

anybody else; the maintenance agency is responsible for assigning them.

And finally, and that's why RFC1591 referred to the ISO 3166, there is a process to include new entities, meaning countries, territories, and areas of geopolitical interest into that list is related, and there are rules within the standard itself. So it doesn't -- so it's clearly linked, with say outside uses again. The maintenance agency does not make up what is or is not a country, nor was that the original thinking about it. That's it. Questions?

NIGEL CASSMIRE:

Nigel Cassmire, CTU. We have had changes in the code 3166. Have there been changes in ccTLDs corresponding? For example a country change and therefore its two letter changed and it had impact on existing register?

BART BOSWINKEL:

Yes, I did, and if you recall from Tuesday you had a brief cry for participation on the retirement of ccTLDs there is some cases documented, and there is a working group from the ccNSO dealing with this progression of retirement. This is the retirement of ccTLDs. I think as going back to probably the latest example which has been concluded is the removal from --

is it the [indiscernible], always turn them around, same from [indiscernible] on the ISO 3166, it resulted that at one point, I think three, four, five, years ago, doesn't matter the duration, that code was removed from the root zone database and doesn't exist anymore, it was replaced by a successor. It has an impact. Although it doesn't happen often, it does happen.

INDONESIA:

In the ISO, the application is set up by the [indiscernible] when you mention that for S, for example, S is almost finished, if I'm not mistaken, if it's not necessary for the [indiscernible] and ISO to make a country's two letter codes with their first alphabet, they can use other alphabet as long as they all agree with that they just use it so they can as many two character as many countries would like to do, because they don't have to use the first alphabet of the name of the country, isn't it?

BART BOSWINKEL:

Let me see if I understood you correctly. So the maintenance agency assigned the two-letter code to the name of a country. That is what is happening. And because, say, the letter S is almost exhausted, meaning it's been used so often that no new country can use S, yes, they can assign whatever they want as long as it is a two-letter code. In order to make it useful, you want to have preferably the first letter or other letter linked to

the name of the country in English or in French. But I could imagine situations, for example in countries where English or French is not the administrative language and the administrative script, that it becomes almost meaningless, say in countries that use different scripts than the Latin script; whether S is the first letter or another letter, really doesn't matter anymore.

So ultimately it's at the discretion of the maintenance agency as long as they assign two-letter codes to the name of a country. And for use purposes and for identification, yes, preferably a two-letter code that links or is somewhat related to the name of the country in French or English.

INDONESIA:

Can I just ask you a different question not related to 3166 but other standards. Because you mentioned that ICANN is a liaison of ISO.

BART BOSWINKEL:

No, ICANN is a liaison to working group 2. And working group 2 is way deep into the weeds of ISO that deals with ISO 3166. That's the reason why they're not related to any other standards.

