



The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

6 August 2015

Mr. Thomas Schneider
Chair, Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)

Re: Two-Letter Codes as Second-Level Domains

Dear Mr. Thomas Schneider:

Thank you for your letter of 16 July 2015, regarding the process for the release of two-letter codes as second-level domains for new gTLDs (<https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/schneider-to-atallah-16jul15-en.pdf>).

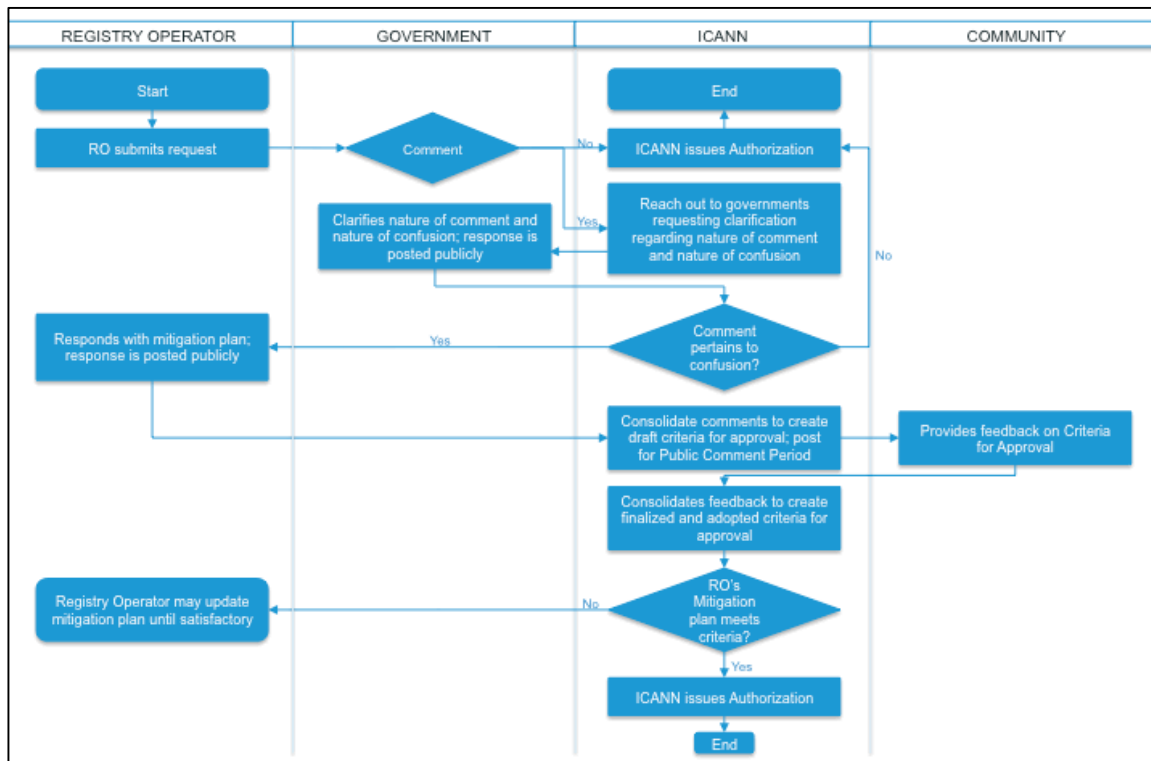
As you know, on 1 December 2014, ICANN implemented the first phase of the Authorization Process for the Release of Two-Character ASCII labels (<https://www.icann.org/resources/two-character-labels>). The process was updated on 23 February 2015 with improvements in response to the Board's 12 February 2015 resolution directing staff to "[i]mplement improvements to the process to alert relevant governments when requests are initiated. Comments from relevant governments will be fully considered" (<https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2015-02-12-en#2.a>).

Now, we are at the next phase of updating the process to include steps for considering and addressing comments submitted by governments. I hope that sharing the high-level components of the updated process will help members of the GAC understand how their comments will be considered, as well as the type of action that will be required from them to participate in the criteria development process. This phase of the process is intended to address all previous comments submitted by governments, and aims to create a set of criteria by which ICANN can evaluate future registry requests.

The initial step of this phase, which will occur in the coming months, is for ICANN to contact governments that have submitted comments and request additional information. Based on Section 2 of Specification 5 of the Registry Agreement, governments will be asked to clarify which specific TLDs their comments pertain to, and to explain how the release of the two-letter label will cause confusion with their corresponding country code.

Next, ICANN will ask registry operators to respond to the governments’ comments with proposed mitigation measures for avoiding confusion with the corresponding country code. With inputs from governments and registry operators, the goal is to develop standardized evaluation criteria and/or mitigation measures to avoid confusion with country codes (the “Measures”). The Measures will be finalized after a public comment period. The Measures will be used to evaluate registry operators’ existing and future requests against comments received by governments. The following flowchart provides a visual overview of the proposed process.

Process for Consideration of Two-Character Comments



The proposal for this phase of the process supports transparency by providing for publication of governments’ and registry operators’ submissions, public comment on the proposed approval criteria, and publicly available approval criteria for the evaluation of future requests. It also provides a mechanism for ICANN to fully consider government comments.



We believe that through this transparent multistakeholder process, we can develop a set of criteria to mitigate confusion with relevant country codes at the second level, which can then be implemented for future two-character authorization requests. We plan to begin implementing the updated process in the latter part of August and will shortly publish a blog to inform the ICANN community of our plans.

I thank the GAC for its involvement in the development of this process and its future inputs for developing the criteria. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or members of the Global Domains Division leadership team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Akram Atallah", is written in a cursive style.

Akram Atallah
President, Global Domains Division