



The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

February 11, 2016

The Honorable Sean P. Duffy  
1208 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-4907

Dear Congressman Duffy:

Thank you for your letter of January 13, 2016 regarding the privatization of the Internet's Domain Name System. By way of background, ICANN has performed some key technical Internet functions, called the IANA functions, under a no-fee contract with the U.S. Government for the past 17 years. In doing this work, ICANN has implemented policies developed by the multistakeholder community, which designed the Internet to become a global platform for economic growth and innovation.

The U.S. Government always envisioned that it would fully privatize the Domain Name system and withdraw from its role as steward of the IANA functions. The March 2014 announcement by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) represents the final phase of the privatization of the Domain Name System, as outlined in a 1998 Department of Commerce White Paper.

In its announcement, NTIA asked ICANN to convene an inclusive, global discussion to determine a process for transitioning the stewardship of these functions to the multistakeholder community. It specifically stated that the transition proposal must have broad community support and address the following four principles:

1. Support and enhance the multistakeholder model;
2. Maintain the security, stability, and resiliency of the Internet DNS;
3. Meet the needs and expectations of the global customers and partners of the IANA services; and,
4. Maintain the openness of the Internet.

NTIA also specified that it would not accept a proposal that replaces NTIA's role with a government-led or intergovernmental organization solution.



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A successful transition will ensure that all members of the Internet's global multistakeholder community, from large and small business, technical experts, civil society, researchers, academics, governments and end users, are partners in the continued expansion and innovation of one, unified Internet. The U.S. Government has participated in this community since its inception, and will continue to do so after the transition.

The United States gave two enormous gifts to the world: The Internet and the multistakeholder model of Internet governance. Under this model, no one entity controls the Internet. The Internet is made up of millions of networks, applications and services accessed by billions of users around the globe. Internet standards are voluntarily developed and adopted by engineers, private industry and users. Internet policy, particularly at ICANN, is developed by private industry, technical experts, academia and civil society and applied globally.

Since the announcement, ICANN has convened the full range of global Internet stakeholders to develop a transition proposal. In fact, many U.S. industry leaders who have participated in ICANN's multistakeholder policy processes in the past such as AT&T, Cisco, Google, Intel, Microsoft and Verizon have also been actively involved in the development of the proposal. Over the past 22 months, stakeholders have collaborated over 30 thousand mailing list exchanges, reviewed thousands of pages of documents, and spent 700 hours in meetings. The process is nearing its end and a proposal should be finalized in the coming weeks.

Without a successful privatization of the IANA functions, the U.S. will lose credibility in its fight for an open, global Internet that is not controlled by governments or intergovernmental organizations. Maintaining the contractual relationship between ICANN and the U.S. Government could motivate other governments, including influential allies, to fragment the Internet by creating their own national or regional Internets. Should fragmentation occur, it would severely damage global commerce and communication. U.S. and global industry and Internet users as a whole would no longer reap the commercial and social benefits of the single, global, free and open Internet.

The United States promised the world that it would privatize the Domain Name System and transition its management to those who have the most at stake in a global Internet: private industry, the technical community, academia, civil society and governments. The future of multistakeholder (as opposed to multilateral) governance of the Internet depends on a successful transition. If the transition fails, repressive governments will gleefully point out that the private-sector led model can't be trusted to manage the Internet. They are hoping we fail so that they can bring Internet governance to an intergovernmental organization. Rather than hand those governments a victory to justify censoring the Internet, we should work together to



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preserve the Internet as the platform for free speech, innovation and competition that drives job creation and development across the globe.

Sincerely,

Fadi Chehadé  
President & CEO, ICANN