

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 13 March 2012

Dear Mr Beckstrom,

I refer to the recent opening of the new generic top level domains programme (the Programme), and in particular to the letter of 13 December 2011 by the legal counsels' of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) to ICANN.

I should like to underline that the Council of Europe is a firm supporter and promoter of the multi-stakeholder approach in Internet policy and of the multi-stakeholder Internet governance model. The Programme marks an important step forward as regards bottom-up and consensus-based solutions in Internet governance.

The creation of new domain names will provide opportunities for individuals and communities to exercise their rights and freedoms as well as for promoting cultural diversity and multilingualism worldwide. Protecting these rights and freedoms pursuant to the European Convention on Human Rights is a legal duty of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

In its Declaration of 21 September 2011 on the protection of freedom of assembly and association with regard to Internet domain names and name strings, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe "declares its support for the recognition by member states of the need to apply fundamental rights safeguards to the management of domain names".

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At the same time I share the view expressed by the legal counsels' of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) of 13 December 2011 about the necessity to ensure adequate protection against the misleading use and registration of the names and acronyms of International Organisations in the Domain Name System. In particular I consider that the names and acronyms of IGOs are already protected within the scope of the Paris Convention and other international agreements.

As an observer to the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), the Council of Europe is ready to co-operate in the implementation of Article 4 of ICANN's Articles of Incorporation "carrying out its activities in conformity with relevant principles of international law and applicable international conventions".

In this connection, I would like to recall the letter of 21 January 2008 from Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General, proposing to ICANN to engage in dialogue with relevant international organisations on matters pertaining to international law and human rights. The Programme would appear to offer a good opportunity to re-examine this proposal.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Thorbjørn Jagland