Governance Document for the Recognition, Maintenance, and Derecognition of Regional Internet Registries

("RIR Governance Document")

8 April 2025 (DRAFT)

Preamble

This RIR Governance Document sets forth the rules and criteria for recognizing new Regional Internet Registries, the operating obligations and requirements of Regional Internet Registries, and the rules and criteria for derecognizing Regional Internet Registries. It is adopted by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers and the Regional Internet Registries. This RIR Governance Document supersedes and replaces the Internet Coordination Policy-2 concerning "Criteria for Establishment of New Regional Internet Registries," as adopted on 4 June 2001.

Article 1:   Definitions and Interpretation

1.1.   Definitions. In this Document, the following capitalized terms have the following meanings:

"Affiliate" means, with respect to a specified entity, any other entity that directly or indirectly Controls, is Controlled by, or is under common Control with the specified entity.

"ASO MoU" means the ICANN Address Supporting Organization (ASO) MoU, as may be amended from time to time.

"Candidate RIR" means an entity that is applying to become an RIR.

"Control" means the possession, directly or indirectly, of the power to determine or cause the direction of the management or policies of an entity or the entity's participation in the governance of an RIR, whether through ownership, by contract, or otherwise.

"Derecognition" means a decision, made pursuant to the terms of this Document, to terminate an RIR's delegated responsibility to provide RIR Services to the RIR's Service Region.

"Global Policy" means an Internet number resource policy as defined in Article 6 of the ASO MoU.

"Governing Body" means a board of directors or functional equivalent, however named, that has the power to govern an RIR.

"IANA Functions Operator" means the entity responsible for performing the IANA Functions.

"IANA Numbering Services" means the administration of the IANA number registries in accordance with Global Policies and any applicable and mutually acceptable and agreed upon guidelines and procedures, including allocation of Number Resources to RIRs, the management of returned Number Resources, general IANA number registries maintenance, and the administration of the unicast portion of the special-purpose "IN-ADDR.ARPA" and "IP6.ARPA" domain name system zones.

"ICANN" means the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

"Internet Numbers Registry System" means the system as defined in RFC 7020.

"Member" means a legal or natural person as applicable that is entitled to participate in the governance of an RIR, including by voting for members of the RIR's Governing Body.

"Notice of Decision" means an official document published by ICANN setting forth the reasons for ICANN's decision to approve or reject a Proposal.

"Numbering Community" means the community of Resource Holders and others who participate in Number Resource management, including but not limited to governments, civil society actors, the technical community, private sector entities, and academia.

"Number Resources" means Internet Protocol (IP) unicast addresses (IPv4, IPv6) and autonomous system (AS) numbers.

"NRO" means the Number Resource Organization, as established by the NRO Memorandum of Understanding in 2003, which functions as the coordinating body for the RIRs.

"Proposal" or **"RIR Status Change Proposal"** means a proposal to Recognize or Derecognize an RIR.

"Recognition" means a decision, made pursuant to the terms of this Document, to delegate the responsibility of providing RIR Services to a Service Region to a Candidate RIR and to recognize such entity as the official RIR for the Service Region.

"Resource Holder" means a legal or natural person, as applicable, that holds Number Resources registered with an RIR.

"RIR" means a Regional Internet Registry.

"RIR Governance Document" or **"Document"** means this Governance Document for the Recognition, Maintenance, and Derecognition of Regional Internet Registries.

"RIR Services" means the delegation of Number Resources and the set of services necessary to ensure that Resource Holders are able to use Number Resources and the Numbering Community is able to obtain accurate information about which Number Resources are held by which entities, including allocation, registration, and directory services as well as related technical services.

"Service Region" means the area for which an RIR is officially designated as the RIR responsible for providing RIR Services.

1.2.   Interpretation. In this Document:

(a)   Capitalized participles, conjugations, plurals, or other derivative forms of defined terms have the meanings associated with those defined terms (e.g., "Recognition" and "Recognized");

(b)   Headings are for convenience only and do not affect interpretation; and

(c)   Any reference in this Document to any other document or agreement shall be deemed to include a reference to such document or agreement as amended, supplemented, or otherwise modified from time to time, including any successor documents or agreements.

Article 2:   Internet Numbers Registry System

2.1.   Roles and Responsibilities. Within the Internet Numbers Registry System, the following entities have the following roles and responsibilities:

(a)   **Individual RIRs:** Each RIR is responsible for providing RIR Services to its Service Region.

(b)   **All RIRs:** The RIRs jointly operate the Internet Number Registry System. All RIRs shall jointly devote best efforts to ensure that all areas are able to continually receive RIR Services.

(c)   **IANA Functions Operator:** The IANA Functions Operator's responsibilities are defined in the Service Level Agreement for the IANA Numbering Services.

(d)   **ICANN:** ICANN is responsible for (i) auditing an RIR's compliance with this Document in accordance with **Sections 2.4** and **4.2**; (ii) making decisions in connection with any RIR Status Change Proposal under **Section 2.3**; and (iii) participating in the process of amending this Document in accordance with **Section 6.1**.

2.2.   Service Region. Each Service Region shall cover a large, multinational area and shall not overlap with that of another RIR.

2.3.   Change to RIR Status. An RIR may be Recognized or Derecognized only in accordance with the following procedures:

(a)   **Recognition**

(i)   A Candidate RIR may apply to be Recognized as an RIR by submitting a Proposal in writing to the RIRs and to ICANN.

(ii)   The RIRs shall consider the Proposal and make a recommendation in favor of or against the Proposal and shall publish their recommendation and the reasons for their recommendation.

(iii)   If the RIRs unanimously recommend Recognizing the Candidate RIR, they shall then refer the Proposal to ICANN, and ICANN shall consider and make the final decision to approve or reject the Proposal under **Section 2.3(c)**.

(iv)   If the RIRs do not unanimously recommend Recognizing the Candidate RIR, the Candidate RIR may petition ICANN to review the Proposal. ICANN may, after considering the petition, refer the Proposal back to the RIRs for reconsideration. If so referred, the RIRs shall reconsider the Proposal, taking into account ICANN's feedback, provided that the RIRs shall be under no obligation to reach a different result. The RIRs shall publish the results of the reconsideration. If the RIRs do not unanimously recommend Recognizing the Candidate RIR on reconsideration, the Proposal shall be deemed rejected.

(b) **Derecognition**

(i)   A Proposal to Derecognize an RIR may be submitted to the RIRs and ICANN in writing by:

a. Any RIR or group of RIRs; or

b. Not less than 25% of the Members of the RIR that is the subject of the Proposal.

(ii)   Each RIR shall consider and decide on the Proposal and shall publish the outcome and the reasons for its decision.

(iii)   If the RIRs, excluding the RIR that is the subject of the Proposal, unanimously recommend Derecognizing the RIR, they shall then refer the Proposal to ICANN, and ICANN shall consider and make the final decision to approve or reject the Proposal under **Section 2.3(c)**.

(iv)   If the RIRs, excluding the RIR that is the subject of the Proposal, do not unanimously recommend Derecognizing the RIR, the Proposal shall be deemed rejected.

(c) **ICANN Decision**

(i)   ICANN shall consider and make the final decision to approve or reject any Proposal referred to it under this **Section 2.3**, provided that ICANN must first consult with and give substantial consideration to the input of each RIR, including the RIR or Candidate RIR, as applicable, that is the subject of the Proposal.

(ii) An RIR or Candidate RIR affected by a decision by ICANN under this **Section 2.3** may petition for ICANN to reconsider its decision in accordance with ICANN's then-existing review procedures, if any.

(iii) ICANN shall have no power to Recognize or Derecognize an RIR unless it has received a Proposal to do so that has been approved by the RIRs in accordance with this **Section 2.3**.

(iv) ICANN may not initiate any Proposal to Recognize or Derecognize an RIR.

(v) ICANN's approval may not modify the terms of any Proposal unless the approving RIRs and, in the case of Recognition, the Candidate RIR, agree to such modification.

(d) **Decision Procedures.** Any decision by an entity under this **Section 2.3** shall be made according to such entity's appropriate decision-making procedures.

2.4. **ICANN Review.** As an alternative or precursor to a Proposal to change the status of an RIR under **Section 2.3**, if it is reasonably believed that an RIR is not complying with this Document, the other RIRs may, by unanimous decision, ask ICANN to conduct an ad hoc audit of the identified RIR, and ICANN shall promptly conduct such audit.

2.5. **Coordination Limitation.** It is an express goal of the Internet Number Registry System to provide stable and reliable services to the Numbering Community. Achievement of this goal requires significant, ongoing coordination among the RIRs, and as such, the total number of RIRs in the Internet Number Registry System shall remain small.

2.6. **Sub-Regional Registries.** Nothing in this Document pertains directly to National Internet Registries, Local Internet Registries (also called Internet Service Providers), or other sub-regional registries that do not receive Number Resources directly from the IANA Functions Operator or limits the ability of an RIR, at its complete discretion, to establish and sub-delegate its Number Resources to one or more such sub-regional registries, provided that any such sub-delegation shall not excuse the RIR from its obligations under this Document, including with respect to such sub-delegated Number Resources.

2.7. **English.** English is the official language of the Internet Numbers Registry System.

Article 3: Recognition

3.1. **Criteria for Recognition.** A Candidate RIR cannot be Recognized unless it demonstrates the following in its application and to the satisfaction of the existing RIRs and ICANN:

(a) **Regional Qualification:** The Candidate RIR's proposed Service Region would meet the requirements of **Section 2.2**, provided that the Candidate RIR's application may contemplate changes to the Service Regions of one or more existing RIRs in order to create a new, non-overlapping Service Region for the Candidate RIR.

(b) **Resource Holder Support:** Resource Holders in the Candidate RIR's proposed Service Region broadly support Recognizing the Candidate RIR as the RIR responsible for providing RIR Services to the Service Region and are committed to financially supporting the Candidate RIR and actively participating in its governance.

(c) **Community Support:** The Numbering Community in the Candidate RIR's proposed Service Region is committed to supporting the Candidate RIR, including by actively participating in its policy development process.

(d) **Capability:** The Candidate RIR can substantively meet all the operational requirements of an RIR specified in **Section 4.1**.

(e) **Impact:** Recognizing the Candidate RIR would not negatively impact the Internet Numbers Registry System or cause any existing RIR to become non-compliant under this Document.

3.2. **Effect of Recognition.** A decision, pursuant to **Section 2.3**, to Recognize a Candidate RIR shall have the following effects:

(a) **RIR Service Responsibility:** The Recognized RIR shall be responsible for providing RIR Services to the Service Region specified in the Notice of Decision and shall become the RIR for the Service Region.

(b) **Memberships:** The Recognized RIR shall become a member of the NRO and shall take all necessary steps necessary and execute all necessary documents to do so.

(c) **Subject to RIR Governance Document:** The Recognized RIR shall be subject to this RIR Governance Document.

(d) **Implementation Timeline:** Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Notice of Decision may prescribe a timeline or set of milestones or conditions that must occur before one or more of the effects specified in this **Section 3.2** become effective or official, provided that the Notice of Decision shall, at a minimum, require the Candidate RIR to agree to this Document.

Article 4: Ongoing Commitments

4.1. **Operational Requirements:** Each RIR must continually comply with this Document and meet the following operational requirements in an auditable fashion:

(a) **Independence:** An RIR must be financially stable and independent.

(b) **Not-for-Profit:** An RIR must operate on a not-for-profit basis.

(c)   **Incorporation:** An RIR must be incorporated and maintain its headquarters within its Service Region.

(d)   **Corporate Governance:** An RIR must follow good corporate governance procedures.

(e)   **Open Membership:** An RIR must permit any Resource Holder holding Number Resources registered with the RIR to become a Member.

(f)   **Member-Controlled:** The majority of an RIR's Governing Body must be elected by the RIR's Members, and the Governing Body must maintain effective control over the RIR.

(g)   **Policy Development Process:** An RIR must maintain and follow clearly documented procedures for the development of Number Resource management policies, including both policies specific to the RIR and Global Policies. Such a policy development process must be open, transparent, impartial publicly documented, and Numbering Community-driven and must provide mechanisms for all interested parties to participate in policy discussions through publicly archived mailing lists or other suitable discussion fora.

(h)   **Policy Compliance:** An RIR must comply with all policies adopted through its policy development process, so long as those policies do not violate any applicable law of the RIR's jurisdiction.

(i)   **Impartiality:** An RIR must operate and apply its policies in a manner that is impartial and consistent.

(j)   **Transparency:** An RIR must maintain and publish comprehensive records of its governance, activities, and finances in a timely and accessible manner.

(k)   **Performance:** An RIR must provide stable, reliable, secure, accurate, and accountable RIR Services using standard protocols and specifications as adopted by the NRO.

(l)   **Continuity:** An RIR must maintain and follow continuity and redundancy procedures and must share such records, data, and systems sufficient to enable another RIR or entity designated by the other RIRs to perform its RIR Services, if necessary.

(m)   **Meetings:** An RIR must organize at least one community meeting annually, in order to facilitate community and policy development discussions. An RIR must also maintain public channels for the facilitation of community and policy development discussions.

(n)   **Disproportionate Control:** An RIR must maintain governance rules and controls to ensure that no person or entity or group of Affiliated entities has the power to effectively control the RIR.

(o)   **Confidentiality:** An RIR must maintain the confidentiality of all non-public registration information collected from Resource Holders or prospective Resource Holders in the course of providing registration services. Notwithstanding the foregoing, and subject to applicable laws, an RIR shall

provide non-public registration information to an external auditor, pursuant to **Section 4.2**, ICANN, the IANA Functions Operator, another RIR in response to a legitimate request from the same for such information, or as otherwise required by this Document.

(p)   **Ecosystem Stability:** An RIR must cooperate with the other RIRs to ensure the ongoing operation and stability of the Internet Number Registry System and must not operate or fail to operate in any manner that threatens such stability.

4.2.   **Audit:** An RIR must participate in and cooperate with periodic or ad hoc audits, conducted by an external and independent auditor appointed by ICANN, to ensure that it continues to comply with this Document. A summary report after any audit will be made available to the Numbering Community.

Article 5:   Derecognition

5.1.   **Possibility of Derecognition.** Subject to **Section 5.2**, an RIR may be Derecognized pursuant to the procedures set forth in **Section 2.3** if it does not continue to meet all the requirements specified in this Document.

5.2.   **Rehabilitation:** In the event that an RIR is non-compliant under this Document, there shall be a presumption in favor of helping such RIR to remedy such non-compliance over other potential responses, and the non-compliant RIR shall be given a reasonable opportunity to cure any such non-compliance. To that end, ICANN and all other RIRs shall provide reasonable support, if requested, to assist the RIR in curing any failure to comply with this Document. A non-compliant RIR shall be Derecognized only as a last resort and where the harms to the Numbering Community and/or to the Internet Number Registry System outweigh the benefits of continuing to forebear the RIR's non-compliance.

5.3.   **Effect of Derecognition.** A decision, pursuant to **Section 2.3**, to Derecognize an RIR shall have the following effects:

(a)   **Handoff:** The Derecognized RIR shall ensure the smooth transfer of its RIR Services and operations, as directed by ICANN, to a successor or interim entity designated in the Notice of Decision.

(b)   **RIR Service Responsibility:** The Derecognized RIR shall no longer be responsible for providing RIR Services to the Service Region specified in the Notice of Decision, shall no longer be recognized as the RIR for the Service Region, and shall cease providing RIR Services or purporting to provide RIR Services.

(c)   **Memberships:** The Derecognized RIR shall no longer be a member of the NRO.

(d)   **Implementation Timeline:** Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Notice of Decision may prescribe a timeline or set of milestones that must occur before one or more of the effects specified in this **Section 5.3** become effective or official.

Article 6:   Amendment

6.1.   **Approval.** This Document may be amended with the unanimous agreement of ICANN and the RIRs, after consulting their respective communities.

6.2.   **Rectification.** If an amendment to this Document would conflict with an RIR's practices, this Document shall take precedence, and the affected RIR shall bring its practices into compliance with this Document, as amended, provided that the affected RIR shall be given a reasonable but specific grace period to do so before the affected RIR will be considered non-compliant.

6.3.   **Periodic Review.** The NRO and ICANN shall periodically assess whether this Document requires a review at least every 10 years. For the avoidance of doubt, the parties may determine after any such assessment that no review is necessary.