

Contribution of Smart Africa on ICP-2 public consultation.

To the Public Consultation on the Second Draft of the “Governance Document for the Recognition, Operation, and Derecognition of Regional Internet Registries (ICP-2)”
October 2025

1. Introduction

The Smart Africa Secretariat welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Second Draft of the Governance Document for the Recognition, Operation, and Derecognition of Regional Internet Registries (ICP-2).

This submission aims to provide constructive inputs to ensure that the lessons learned during the last AFRINIC crisis are avoided in the future. The Ad-hoc Committee established under Smart Africa’s Internet Governance initiative has made some proposals for reforms that will be transmitted to the AFRINIC board. However, this contribution is made on behalf of the Smart Africa Secretariat, as part of its broader mandate to promote policy coherence, transparency, and sustainability in the governance of Africa’s Internet infrastructure.

2. General Support

Smart Africa commends the efforts of ICANN and the global community in updating the ICP-2 framework, which remains an essential reference for the legitimacy, accountability, and operational effectiveness of Regional Internet Registries.

We commend the NRO and the ICP-2 review team for strengthening:

- **Recognition and Derecognition Criteria** – providing clearer safeguards for RIR legitimacy.
- **Accountability and Bottom-up Governance Principles** – reinforcing transparency and community-driven policy.
- **Operational Resilience Requirements** – emphasizing stability of registry services.

These provisions are particularly timely for Africa, given AFRINIC’s recent governance crisis and the urgent need to align to internationally recognized standards.

3. Additional components

a) Governance and Elections

- **ICP-2 Draft 2 relevance:** Reinforces bottom-up accountability and prevents capture.
- **Contribution:** We strongly encourage ICP-2 to explicitly reference safeguards against proxy voting abuses as lessons from African experience. There are sufficient secure online voting mechanisms that no longer necessitates the use of Proxy.

b) Legal and Institutional Protections

- **ICP-2 Draft 2 relevance:** Recognition criteria should consider whether the RIR has sufficient legal protections to operate independently.
- **Contribution:** We propose ICP-2 explicitly cites host country immunities for RIRs as an acceptable model, with safeguards against misuse. We have observed a situation where legal harassment has paralyzed the registry functions.

c) Operational Continuity and Risk Management

- **ICP-2 Draft 2 relevance:** Stresses uninterrupted service and data escrow mechanisms.
- **Contribution:** We suggest ICP-2 make **data escrow** a mandatory requirement for all RIRs, reflecting lessons from AFRINIC where absence of escrow increased systemic risk.

d) Stakeholder Engagement and Representation

- **ICP-2 Draft 2 relevance:** Calls for multistakeholder participation and transparency.
- **Contribution:** We recommend ICP-2 to recognize **constituency models** similar to ICANN and others as an acceptable mechanism to ensure balanced representation, provided that relevant bottom-up policy development remains intact.

e) Digital Sovereignty and Regional Specificities

- **ICP-2 Draft 2 relevance:** Neutral on sovereignty but stresses global coordination.
- **Contribution:** We recommend that ICP-2 recognize constituency-based models similar to those implemented within ICANN and other global governance frameworks as effective mechanisms to ensure balanced representation across stakeholder groups. These models should promote inclusive participation from governments, regulators, private sector actors, civil society, academia, and technical communities, while maintaining a strong commitment to transparency and accountability. Open consultations, regional dialogues, and public reporting should be institutionalized to ensure that decision-making processes remain bottom-up, participatory, and reflective of the diversity of perspectives within the Internet governance ecosystem.

4. Identified Gaps and Proposals

ICP-2 Draft 2 Principle	Gap/Need	Proposed Contribution
Recognition & Derecognition	Limited clarity on process of re-recognition in case of collapse	Request ICP-2 to detail step-by-step Recognition to avoid prolonged paralysis
Accountability	Aligns well, but constituency model not explicitly covered	Ask ICP-2 to cite constituency-based governance as legitimate
Legal Protections	Immunities not mandated globally	Propose ICP-2 to cite host country immunities

Service Continuity	Broad provisions in data escrow	Call for ICP-2 to make data escrow mandatory
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5. Conclusion

While AFRINIC's crisis exposed structural vulnerabilities, it also provided valuable lessons for strengthening ICP-2 globally.

We encourage the ICP-2 review team to take into account Africa's experience and incorporate the above proposals into the final version of the Governance Document. We remain available for further dialogue and technical input.

Respectfully submitted,

The Smart Africa