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APNIC Executive Council Response to APNIC Member Survey Report, 2001

20 February 2002

Dear APNIC Members and friends,

During 2001 the APNIC Executive Committee commissioned KPMG Consulting to conduct a survey of APNIC members and stakeholders. The intent of the survey was to provide input to APNIC to ensure that it continues to serve the needs of the APNIC membership in conducting its core service functions, and in setting future directions.

The consultant's report has been published, and provides a comprehensive summary of the inputs received, according to major issues raised in the survey, geographic areas of concern, and the various types of members and stakeholders who responded. A full description of the survey and the manner in which it was conducted is also provided in the report.

The APNIC Executive Committee has reviewed the findings of the survey report, and this document is the Executive Committee's response to the report. The Executive Committee has highlighted a number of areas of potential development of APNIC services, and of APNIC as an organization.

This latest survey represents an important step in the ongoing development of APNIC, and the efforts of KPMG, Dr John Earls and Dr Tan Tin Wee are gratefully acknowledged. Membership comment is now sought on both the Survey Report and on this response from the APNIC Executive Committee.

1. APNIC Services

The Member Survey shows clearly that IP address allocation is the single most important service of APNIC to its members. Secondary APNIC services were seen to fall into the categories of Resource and Database Services, Training and Meetings. The survey report also identified a wide range of services that APNIC may provide in future, and some of these are addressed later in this response.

It is clear from this survey that within the APNIC community there are diverse views about APNIC's role and responsibilities, and about the services it should offer. The EC regards this diversity as a strength of the APNIC community, which will foster valuable discussion and debate in future.

2. APNIC Service Quality

While the survey report noted that the majority of members were satisfied with the level of service provided by APNIC, it also listed various suggestions for potential improvements to services.

The issues of service response time and the lack of a dedicated account management structure were noted in some responses. The EC is aware of certain recent improvements in APNIC account management practices, and of plans for new services including the APNIC Helpdesk. The Secretariat is encouraged to continue improving the delivery of services to APNIC members, as a major ongoing priority.

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It was noted that some members find the resource application process complex and cumbersome. This situation may be addressed through development of additional support materials and training (such as example templates, online tutorials that describe the application process, and web-based resources that perform basic consistency checking) and these should be investigated by the Secretariat.

The issue of the global proliferation and inconsistency of resource databases was highlighted in the report, and one potential activity for APNIC is to investigate the harmonization and improvement of these databases, allowing (for example) single NIC handles to be associated with resources across a number of them.

3. Future APNIC Services

The report noted a number of future services that members and stakeholders felt could or should be offered by APNIC. Many of these services fall within APNIC's mandate, while some are under development or may be developed as extensions of current projects at APNIC. Others are entirely new activities which require more detailed examination by APNIC members before necessary resources should be allocated.

One important service development highlighted by the survey report is the provision of multi-lingual documentation and support to members. This is already underway as an APNIC activity, but does need to be accelerated.

The suggested fee-for-service consultancy operation is considered by the Executive Committee to be potentially difficult in many ways, and requiring of further discussion by the Membership. However as an related interim activity, the Secretariat could strengthen its online materials to provide a more comprehensive reference source for members, including links, case studies, operational and security information etc.

Some initiatives that are clearly within APNIC's current charter are those of the routing registration service and monthly statistical reports on allocation activity. These are being actively pursued by the APNIC Secretariat, and the EC believes that these should now be fully incorporated as standard services covered by Helpdesk, training and other support.

While APNIC's training activities are apparently well known and supported, there is a clear mandate from this survey for APNIC to support much broader training activities. While APNIC is not necessarily viewed as the sole provider of such services, it is seen as a capable and appropriate facilitator of such activities.

Another significant service request highlighted in the report is the publication by APNIC of more comprehensive activity reports relating to Internet development in the region. While APNIC reporting has increased, the EC would encourage ongoing development of capacity for reporting and analysis within the Secretariat.

4. Member Input to APNIC

Members suggested a number of ways to encourage member input to APNIC.

A major issue highlighted in this survey is that a number of members want to see APNIC more active in conducting a dialogue with various national and regional governmental agencies, particularly those associated with the formulation of Internet-related policies at this level.

Another major issue which is yet to be fully addressed within the APNIC community is the framework for properly accommodating and serving the NIR members of APNIC, and the ISP constituents of those NIRs. This is a priority area for ongoing work by both the Secretariat and the Membership itself.

5. APNIC Decision Framework

This section of the survey highlighted some concerns regarding the sometimes slow speed of decision processes within APNIC meetings. This concern must be balanced against the desire to ensure that all members can fully brief themselves on matters to be discussed at APNIC and also fully consider the implications of various policy options.

It is unclear whether alternative mechanisms such as electronic forums and online voting would increase participation or reduce decision making delays in APNIC processes. However, there is sufficient concern voiced in the survey to investigate this as an option for APNIC for certain classes of topics to be considered by the membership.

It is clear that a critical factor in APNIC meetings is the diversity of languages represented, while meetings are conducted in English. The EC suggests that an investment is justified to address this issue, and available options should be examined by the Secretariat during 2002.

With best regards,

6. Member's Role

The survey reports notes that APNIC members in general understand their role and responsibilities as users of Internet resources. However APNIC training and other outreach activities are very important in ensuring that this awareness is extended to new members and the community.

As mentioned, the role of National Internet Registries is one which still needs to be fully integrated into APNIC's membership structure and representative processes.

7. ISO quality certification

Given the strength of membership support for ISO certification, it is appropriate to investigate the costs and overheads associated with ISO 9000 certification of APNIC's resource allocation processes. The Secretariat is therefore asked to act on this matter during 2002.

8. Supporting Diversity

The survey noted the high level of diversity within the region, but the response was mixed as to whether APNIC should adjust its processes to take this into account. Consistency of the resource application policy across the region was considered by some members to be entirely appropriate, while other members voiced the need for some diversity in this approach.

The APNIC EC asserts that APNIC's implementation of technical policies must be driven by technical factors; however these technical drivers may vary substantially within the AP region. APNIC policies and procedures should be sensitive to variations in technical environment throughout the region, so that no part of the region is disadvantaged.

Given the diversity of the region, the EC suggests that the Secretariat should work to develop more specific expertise in sub-regions of the Asia Pacific. Although the APNIC staff is culturally diverse, it is suggested capabilities be further developed to include sub-regional specific expertise. A suitable structure may involve a small team of "liaison staff" to undertake research, liaison and coordination activities. Such a structure would also help to address a need identified in the survey for more comprehensive reporting of Internet growth trends in the APNIC region.

9. Supporting Development

There was a wide range of responses to this topic, advocating a role for APNIC in network operations, conferences, consulting, training, grants, policy changes and liaison with governments.

While APNIC has a clear mandate within its incorporation and membership documents to support Internet development in the Asia Pacific, it also must also be careful to manage Member resources in the mutual interest of those members. Many "development" initiatives are consistent with Member interests, while others may not be, and case-by-case treatment will always be necessary.

The survey report highlights the unique position of APNIC as a now successful organization which can play a crucial role in leadership and facilitation of development activities. Therefore the EC encourages the APNIC staff to consider activities which may be hosted by APNIC but funded or cofunded by other bodies, and where cooperation with suitable partners can leverage greater benefit than action by APNIC alone.

It is considered that these important topics will be of ongoing interest, and can be most usefully addressed within the context of APNIC's online forums and the APNIC member meetings.

10. Governmental Liaison

The report notes a high level of support for the establishment of regular constructive relationships with governments. The Executive Committee is mindful of the existing roles of members and NIRs in policy development within their respective domains. However it is also appropriate to note that APNIC is a regional self-regulatory industry body that sets policies relating to the allocation of Internet address resources within the region. This role does have various implications in the area of national and regional policy, and APNIC should be in a position to clearly explain its role and its adopted policies to various governmental bodies.

The Executive Committee would be supportive of APNIC initiatives that communicate APNIC's role and policies to various national and regional Internet policy agencies.

11. Other Matters

A number of other APNIC issues are noted in this report. While many of these topics should be referred to the APNIC membership forum for further consideration, a number of topics are highlighted in this response:

Appeal Process. The survey report suggested that APNIC should have an appeal process to allow disputes to be resolved by independent arbiters. The EC notes that APNIC Bylaws and Membership Agreement do contain comprehensive arbitration provisions; however these may not have been fully incorporated into the APNIC procedural documentation. Therefore the Secretariat is asked to provide better documentation of existing mechanisms.

Membership Category for linked or affiliated entities. The survey noted the desirability for a non-service category of membership for linked or affiliated entities. It is noted that this has been implemented in the latest changes with the APNIC membership structure (through the "Associate" membership category).

Regulate use, misuse and cost of address space. APNIC is not a regulatory body, and cannot impose "regulation" on members of the community. However APNIC can analyse and report on various factors in the use of address space, and as mentioned above, ongoing development of this reporting activity is encouraged.

Che-Hoo Cheng
Chair
APNIC Executive Council