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Workplan Task Number2 5.1.8

Working Group WG 2

Author(s) / Submitter(s) NGA

Proposal for MRN Management by National Authorities

# Summary

This document proposes a decentralized system for management and allocation of country codes for use within IALA’s MRN domains. The proposed system utilizes ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes in accordance with ISO rules. It is based on identification of a National Authority for MRN Management, using IALA’s current membership structure.

This document also proposes that IALA take the proactive step of assigning National Authorities and associated country codes, rather than wait for development of a more complex system. This will benefit countries and agencies who are ready to begin experimenting with MRN implementation, based on IALA guidelines.

## Purpose of the document

IALA is in need of a system to manage the assignment of country codes within IALA’s MRN domains. Such a system should allow for decentralized management, reducing the administrative overhead for the IALA Secretariat. A decentralized approach also provides for maximum flexibility for individual countries wishing to adapt a current naming/numbering schema into MRN namespace.

In addition to being decentralized, IALA’s MRN domain management system should build upon well-established, stable foundations. This paper advocates the application of ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes. These 2-letter codes are the most widely used of the country codes published by ISO; are used in a variety of standards, including the UN/LOCODE and the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority; and have been in use for more than 40 years.

The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) publication RFC 8141 describes methods governing the use and application of Uniform Resource Names (URN). RFC 8141 describes requirements for a process of assigning URNs. One potential mechanism is a limited system, where assigning URNs is “delegated to authorities recognized by a particular organization.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Such a limited system seems particularly well-suited for IALA’s purposes.

To allocate country codes to respective authorities, IALA will turn to its National Membership list. For MRN purposes, National Members will become MRN National Authorities. National Authorities will be assigned their respective ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 code(s), and a list of country code use will be posted on the IALA MRN Registry site. These codes will be available for immediate use by the National Authorities, as defined in the G1143 standards governing the MRN namespaces.

For agencies outside or beyond IALA-identified National Authorities, this document proposes that IALA encourage agreement and application within established country codes. Agencies without an assigned country code should come to an agreement with the National Authority in the country of their main office. This allows individual countries the flexibility to manage their respective namespaces, while maintaining a decentralized approach that does not incur additional administrative burdens on the IALA Secretariat. An agency in the United States wishing to utilize some part of the “urn:mrn:iala:aton:us:” namespace would come to an agreement with the United States’ National Authority, the United States Coast Guard. Such an agency may agree to use “urn:mrn:iala:aton:us:nga:,” for instance, and abide by all other IALA and country-specific MRN guidelines.

This document also proposes that IALA encourage the use of all existing ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes, including those for dependent territories, offshore islands, and special areas of geographical interest. The assignment of a country code does not indicate IALA’s recognition of an area in any geopolitical sense.

It is worth noting that the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 code system allows for “User-assigned” codes, which are free for the assignment of users. Such codes can be utilized in the future for agencies or circumstances that cannot be envisioned at this time.

Additional details are available in two attachments, including a comparison of ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes and IALA National Members (based on a 2017 Membership List), and a more robust description of the use of ISO codes within IALA’s domain.

# Action requested of the Committee

The Committee is requested to discuss and review the proposed management aspects and take action as appropriate.

1. Input document number, to be assigned by the Committee Secretary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Input papers should be assigned to a work task as listed in the Committee work plan which is available in input papers. Leave open if uncertain but consider how the paper is to be processed if not relevant to a work task [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. RFC 8141, published by the IETF, available at <https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc8141> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)