

Critical Internet Resources

The Report of the United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance defines critical Internet resources as including the “administration of the domain name system and Internet protocol addresses (IP addresses), administration of the root server system, technical standards, peering and interconnection, telecommunications infrastructure, including innovative and convergent technologies, as well as multilingualization.”

Defenders of the current set of arrangements have long maintained that there is no need for changes, arguing “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” There are arguments that changes must be focused on addressing specific issues and user interests. Other commentators have maintained that some users benefit much more than others from the status quo, and have called for changes in the governance of critical Internet resources.

Some stakeholders observe that as the Internet has become a global facility available to the public, it is appropriate that private-sector organisations making decision about critical Internet resources, such as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), should be subject to state regulation and oversight. ICANN, which is currently only answerable to the United States, should be answerable to the international community at large. Others have argued strongly that the international community should take a more active role in addressing critical Internet resources.

National and international information technology organizations have countered that the current arrangements for Internet operations and management are working well and should not be changed. Issues resolved at the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society should not be reopened, and the work of existing organizations should not be challenged.

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