Internet: organisation and management, international and European policy issues 1998-2000.

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PURPOSE : to present a Communication on the Organisation and Management of the Internet: International and European Policy Issues 1998-2000. CONTENT : the organisation and management of the Internet infrastructure involves several limited but essential technical coordination functions. This Communication addresses: - recent developments in this area, during the 1998-2000 period; - transfering the US Government's responsibilities to ICANN; - the principle policy issues for the European Union and internationally, and - operational conclusions for the European Union. This Communication also draws attention to the current expansion of the Internet in Europe and its importance as a key economic and social infrastructure. This is likely to put the capacity of the existing system under some strain. The Commission has already taken some measures aimed at improving the economy and efficiency of the communications infrastructure for Internet use and will continue to monitor the development of this situation. In relation to the international aspects, the European private sector participants have played a critical role in establishing the European Union's position at all levels in the global coordination of the Internet infrastructure functions: the ICANN Board and Supporting Oragnisations, the DNS Root Server system, Internet Registeries and Registrars and in the IETF and the World Wide Web Consortium. Without that commitment, the public policy role of the EU and the Member States would be much less effective, if not impossible. Maintaining and deepening European private sector membership and participation in the ICANN organisation is a critical pre-condition for successful participation by the EU both from the point of view of the Internet user community in Europe and from the point of view of public policy. Regarding the EU's international role, the Commission requests the Council and the European Parliament to confirm the Union's existing role as a participant, co-ordinator and, where necessary, negotiator in this area. This involves the International organisations, notably WIPO and the ITU, bilateral relationships with several governments, including the ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC). These international responsibilities go beyond a simple presence and oversight of the ICANN process. They also involve specific aspects of EU public policy: - the neutral global role of ICANN; - the scope of the US Government's remaining powers over the Internet infrastructure; - international aspects of intellectual property, competition and data protection policy; - the scope of ICANN's authority regarding Registries and Registrars. Furthermore, the European Union has argued consistently for a balanced global participation in Internet management structures and international representation in the competent ICANN bodies, respecting the principle of geographical diversity. However, to date, many developing countries areunder-represented in this process. Thus, considering the European Union's role and responsibility for development, the Commission will try and find ways of improving their participation in the organisation and management of the Internet. The Communication addresses each of these matters in greater detail and indicates the conclusions and recommendations that the Commission has reached in each case. In addition, the Communication also addresses a number of European policy issues that require further attention during the months to come, that will also require the continued support and cooperation of the Council and the Member States if the Commission's objectives are to be achieved. These include: - Internet Domain name System; - Intellectual Property Rights; - National Country Code Top Level Domains; - Alternative dispute resolution; - Competition policy. In conclusion, in light of the Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, the significance of these issues can only be re-emphasised. Indeed, the whole scope of the Information Society and electronic commerce in the EU, and world-wide, is influenced by the stability, and reliability of the Internet in the context of its extremely rapid growth.