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| From: ARM Committee | ARM9-12.3.7 |
| To: IALA Secretariat | 5 April 2019 |

LIAISON NOTE

Management of MRNs

# Summary

This document contains a proposal for how to manage *Maritime Resource Names (MRN)*, more specifically the assignment of Organization IDs by IALA, as well as a system for sharing of MRN definitions (organization-specific namespace strings) that have cross-organization interest.

# INTRODUCTION TO MRN

At ENAV17, the Danish Maritime Authority presented Maritime Resource Names (MRN) as a system for uniquely identifying maritime resources on a global scale using Uniform Resource Identifiers.

To give a short recap, MRNs are defined using the following hierarchical structure (full syntax available in Annex A):

*"urn:mrn:"<NSS>*

where NSS is the Namespace Specific String composed as follows:

*<NSS>::=<Organization ID>":"<Organization-specific namespace ID>":"<Organization-specific namespace string>*

The MRN scheme is highly adaptable. Each organization can choose its own layout for a specific type of identifiers. It is easy to fit existing identifiers into the naming scheme. And it provides good context information about the type of the identifier in comparison to something simple like a random UUID.

A hypothetical MRN example is:

An aton located in the USA could be identified as follows:

*urn:mrn:iala:aton:us:1234X5*

# Organization IDs

The leftmost part of a MRN string is the *Organization ID* or *OID.* In order to assure that no organization uses the same OID a centralised assignment process is needed. This is similar to how in the Domain Name System, IANA deals with assignments at the higher levels. While subdomains are administered by the organisation to which the space has been delegated.

It is recommended that a simple registration process is provided by filling out a template on first come first served basis[[1]](#footnote-1), the request process is described in chapter 5.

The contents of a template should just contain the minimum information needed. Here is an example of a hypothetical registration of “iho” for the International Hydrographic Organization:

mcl.txt

Organization ID:

iho

Date:

2017-06-22

Declared registrant:

Registering organization:

International Hydrographic Organization

http://www.iho.int

Contact:

IHO Secretariat

info@iho.int

Purpose:

The International Hydrographic Organization is an intergovernmental consultative and technical organization that was established in 1921 to support safety of navigation and the protection of the marine environment.  
  
The objectives of the Organization are to bring about:

* The coordination of the activities of national hydrographic offices
* The greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and documents
* The adoption of reliable and efficient methods of carrying out and exploiting hydrographic surveys
* The development of the sciences in the field of hydrography and the techniques employed in descriptive oceanography

IALA will provide a web site with all registered OID and will maintain a database of all entries and provides this database as CSV file on the web site as well.

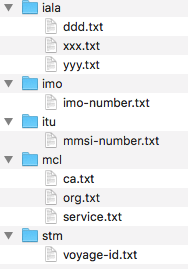
# Organization-specific namespace IDs

The Organization-specific namespace ID is the part following immediately after the Organization ID. It is assigned in a decentralised way by an organisation that have obtained an Organisation ID. Just like in the Domain Name System (DNS) where whenever an organisation has registered a new domain. The organisation is free to create new subdomains as they want without involving a central authority, for example, enav.foo.org or xxx.enav.foo.org.

While a totally decentralised approach would the easiest from an administrative point of view. We believe that it would make sense to have a central repository where organizations *should*, but does not have to, register MRN definitions they expect will be used across of multiple organisations.

This would make it much easier to discover existing definitions and avoid creating overlapping definitions. Furthermore, it would be easy to find existing definitions that could serve as an inspiration when defining new MRN strings. Finally, there would be no need to send information about MRN definitions back and forth using email or similar methods.

We propose that the same public repository used for Organization IDs could be used for these definitions. The definitions could be stored in a simple hierarchical view such as this:



Each text file would contain a filled-out template similar to the one used for the Organization ID registration process. The exact contents of this template have yet to be defined. However, we believe the following considerations could be used as a starting point:

## Syntax

Since MRNs are expected to be involved in a lot of machine to machine communication or inclusion in documents such as Extensible Markup Language (XML) documents, it is vital that the exact syntax is formalised to avoid any kind of unambiguous representation. To avoid this, a description of the structure of MRNs within the namespace, in conformance with the fundamental MRN syntax is needed. The structure might be described in terms of a formal definition (e.g., using ABNF [RFC5234]), an algorithm for generating conformant URNs, or a regular expression for parsing the string into constituent parts.

## Assignment

The main use case of MRNs is to function as unique identifiers. Therefore, it is important to describe which method is used for ensuring that MRNs within the namespace are unique. This can be done, for example, by assigning URNs sequentially or using a well-defined process by a single authority. Assignment could also be partitioned among delegated authorities that are individually responsible for respecting uniqueness rules. This is, for example, was used in the STM project for generating unique vessel IDs.

The mechanisms or authorities for assigning URNs to resources should also be described. For example, it should be clear whether assignment is completely open (e.g., following a particular procedure such as first-come, first-served), completely closed (e.g., for a private organization), or limited in various ways (e.g., delegated to authorities recognized by a particular organisation). If limited, it should be described how to become an assigner of names or how to request assignment of names from existing assignment authorities.

## Security and Privacy

This section should describe any potential issues related to security and privacy with regard to assignment or use within the MRN namespace. For example, leakage of private information when names part of the MRN and MRNs are communicated over a public communication channel.

## Interoperability

Interoperability with existing identifier schemes must be evaluated. For example, if an existing non-URN identifier system uses non-ASCII characters these characters must be percent-encoded.

## Additional Information

An optional “Addition Information” section could include information that is useful to those trying to understand this registration or its relationship to other registrations, for example, comparisons to existing MRN namespaces that might seem to overlap.

# Governance And Organisation

The overall management responsibility of IALA with regards to MRN is a part of the IALA Domains management organisation.

## Procedure on obtaining an organization-specific namespace

Representatives of recognised organisations may submit a request to obtain an organisation ID under the MRN of IALA. They can do this by email to [mrn@iala-aism.org](mailto:mrn@iala-aism.org). The minimum information needed to process the request is to fill out a template which can be retrieved from the MRN part of the IALA website.

The IALA Domain Administrator will:

* validate the request of the recognized organisation;
* update the organisation ID;
* inform the organisation of the decision.

## Appeals

A recognised organisation may appeal if it disagrees with the decision of the Domain Administrator to approve or reject a request for an organisation ID. An appeal shall contain at a minimum a description of the situation, a justification for the appeal, and a statement of the impact if the appeal is not successful.

The organisation shall submit its appeal to the Domain Administrator.

The Domain Administrator shall:

* forward the appeal to IALA Deputy Secretary-General for final decision;
* inform the appellant of the decision.

# ACTION REQUESTED OF THE Secretariat

IALA is requested to take responsibility of ownership of the MRN registry and manage it according to the principles described in this document.

1. MRN ABNF Grammar

The basic syntax for a MRN is defined using the Augmented Backus-Naur Form (ABNF) as specified in [RFC5234]:

<MRN> ::= "urn" ":" "mrn" ":" <OID> ":" <OSS>

[ rq-components ]

[ "#" f-component ]

<OID> ::= (alphanum) 0\*32(alphanum / "-") (alphanum) ;

Organization ID

<OSS> ::= <OSNID> ":" <OSNS> ; Organization-specific

string

<OSNID> ::= (alphanum) 0\*32(alphanum / "-") (alphanum)

; Organization-specific namespace ID

<OSNS> ::= pchar \*(pchar / "/") ; Organisation-specific

namespace string

Rules not defined here:

* alphanum and pchar as defined in [RFC3986].

* rq-components and f-component as defined in [RFC8141].

The namespace, “mrn”, is case-insensitive in processing but is conventionally written in lower case.

Q-component, F-component and R-component are not generally defined by this specification. Organisation specific namespace strings might choose to make use of them where applicable.

1. Registrations of well-known maritime stakeholders such as IMO or ITU can only be performed by the respective organizations [↑](#footnote-ref-1)