ICANN's geographical Regions

Dave Archbold

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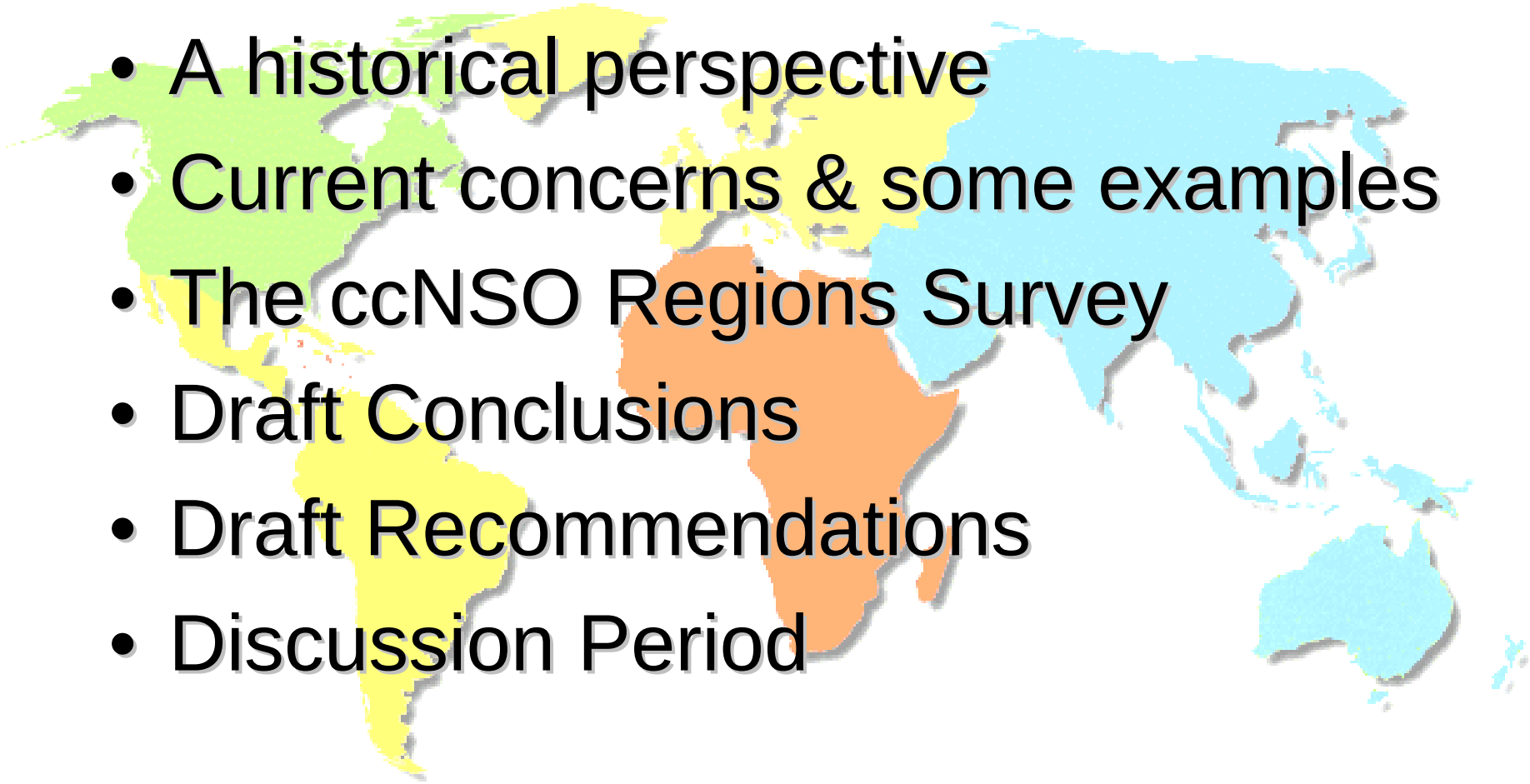
Agenda



- A historical perspective
- Current concerns & some examples
- The ccNSO Regions Survey
- Draft Conclusions
- Draft Recommendations
- Discussion Period

Regions – The Definition

ICANN Bylaws – Article VI, Section 5

International Representation

..As used in these Bylaws, each of the following is considered to be a "Geographic Region": **Europe; Asia/Australia/Pacific; Latin America/Caribbean Islands; Africa; and North America**. The specific countries included in each Geographic Region shall be determined by the Board, and this Section shall be reviewed by the Board from time to time (but at least every three years) to determine whether any change is appropriate, taking account of the evolution of the Internet.

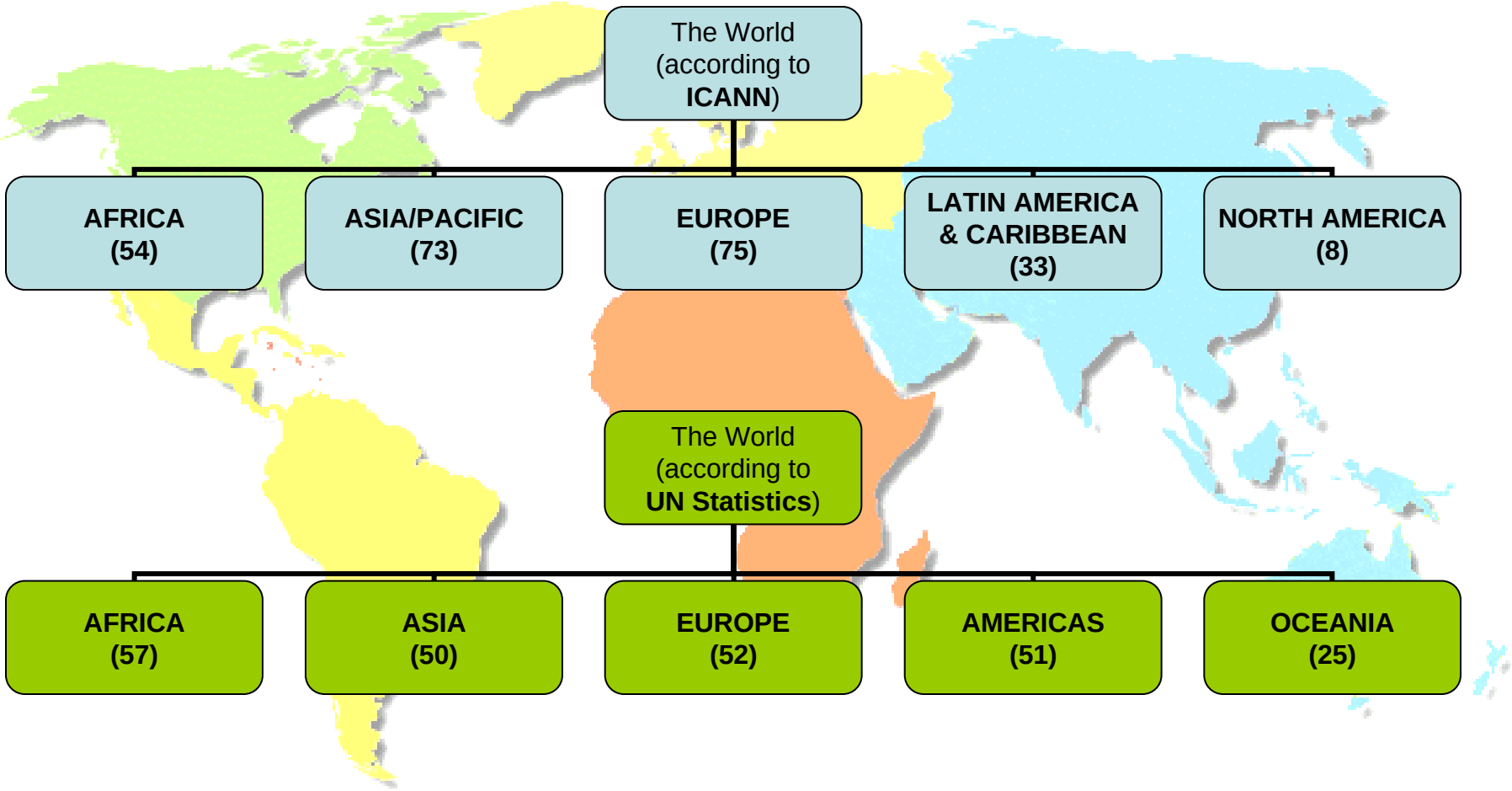
From Minutes of the Board 16 July 2000 (Yokohama)

- Board members expressed concern about assigning countries to regions, but noted that it was necessary to do so and that it was *best to refer to some independently prepared and authoritative list for this purpose.*
- Mr.McLaughlin responded that *persons from areas that are not countries would be grouped together with the country of citizenship for that area.*

The Board Resolution

- Whereas, Article V, Sec. 6, of the ICANN Bylaws calls upon the Board to determine a specific allocation of countries among five general geographic regions (Europe; Asia/Australia/Pacific; Latin America/Caribbean islands; Africa; North America); and
- Whereas, this year's At Large membership elections will entail the selection of one Director from each of ICANN's five geographic regions; and
- Whereas, the Governmental Advisory Committee, upon the ICANN staff's request for advice, recommended that "*With regard to the definition of ICANN's Geographic Regions, ICANN should make reference to existing international norms for regional distribution of countries*," it is
- Resolved [00.64] that the staff is directed to *assign countries to geographic regions on the basis of the United Nations Statistics Division's current classifications* of "Countries or areas, codes and abbreviations," as revised 16 February 2000, and "Composition of macro geographic (continental) regions and component geographical regions," as revised 16 February 2000.

The Two Regional Structures



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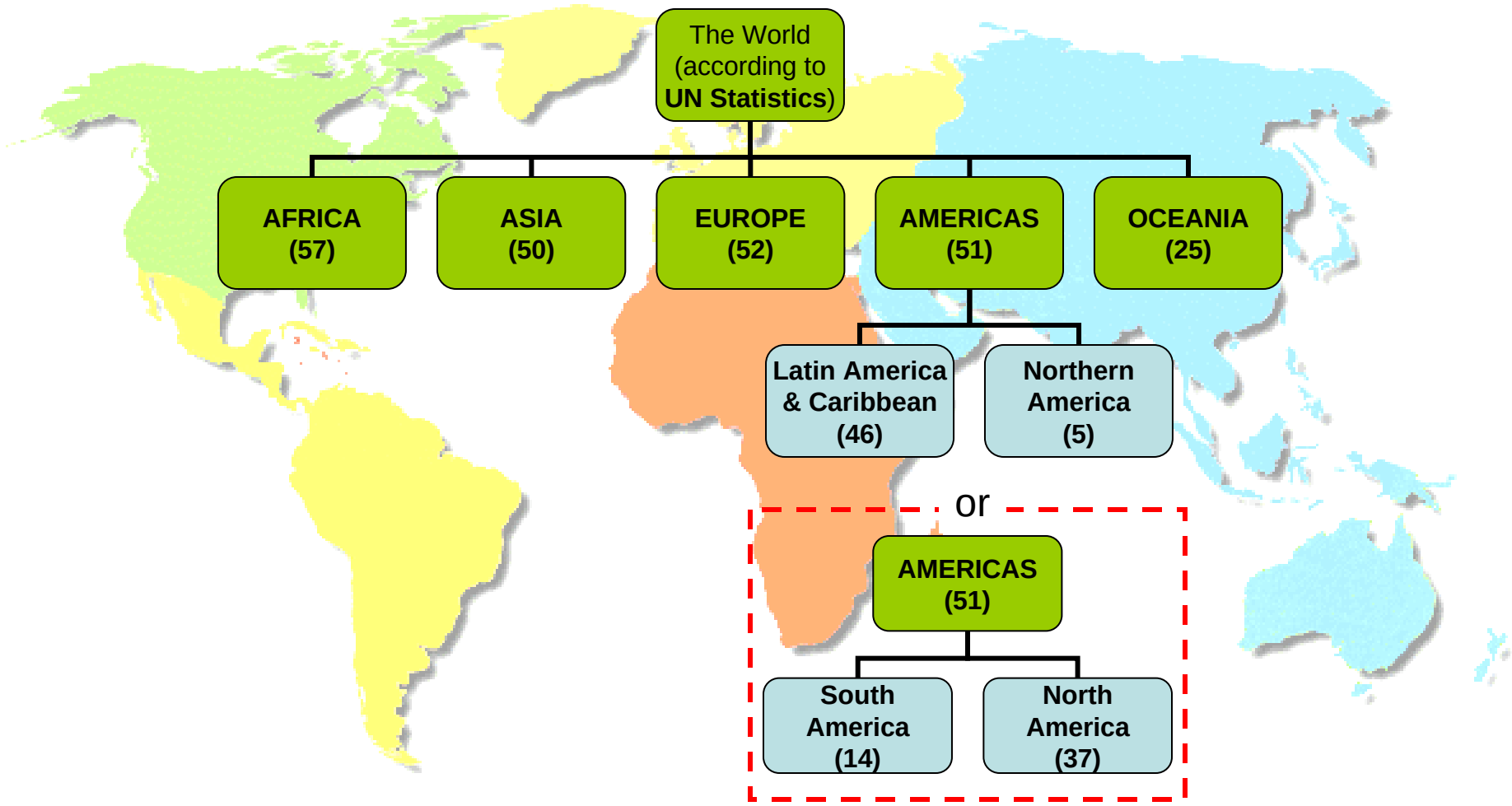

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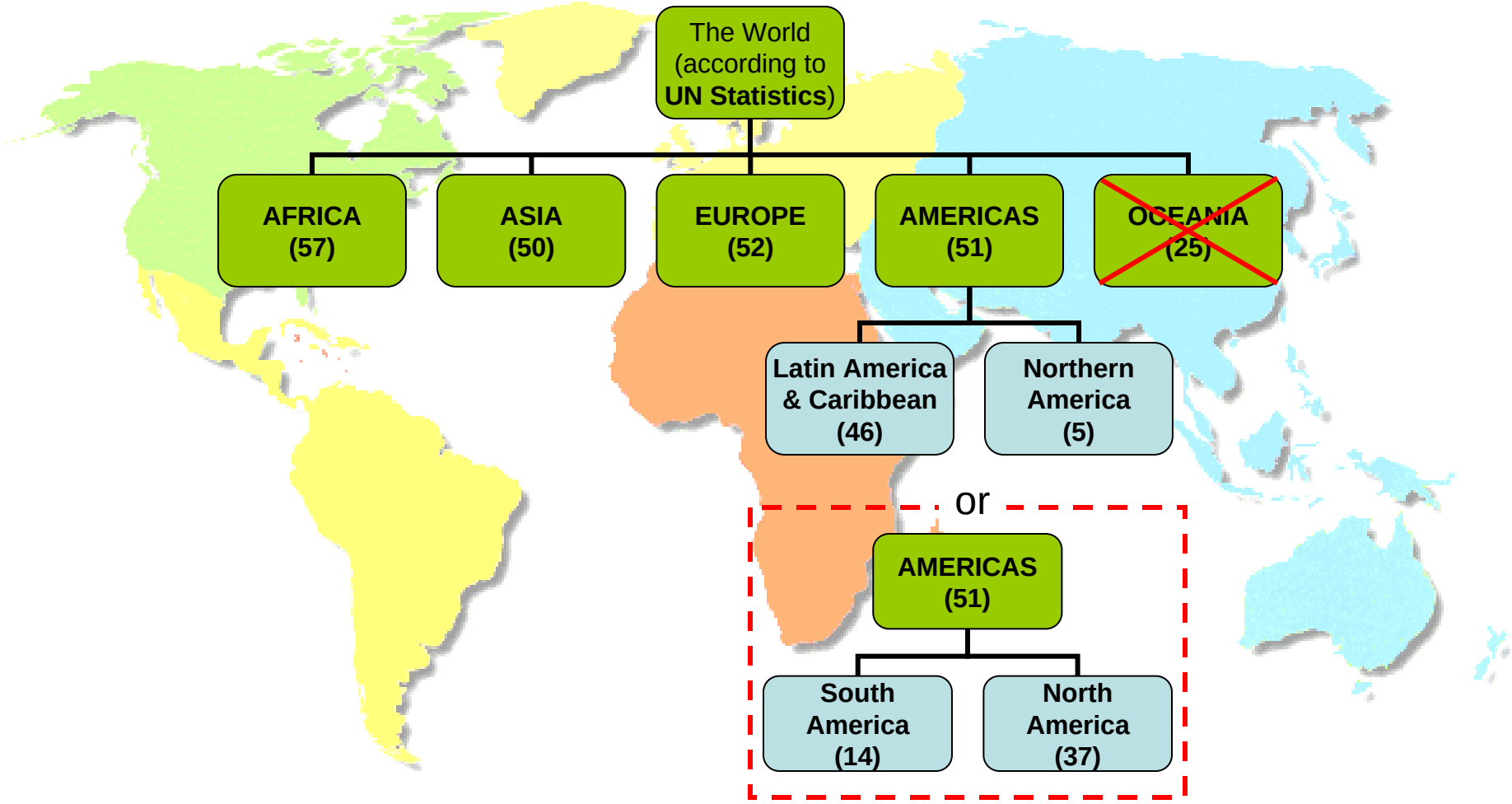

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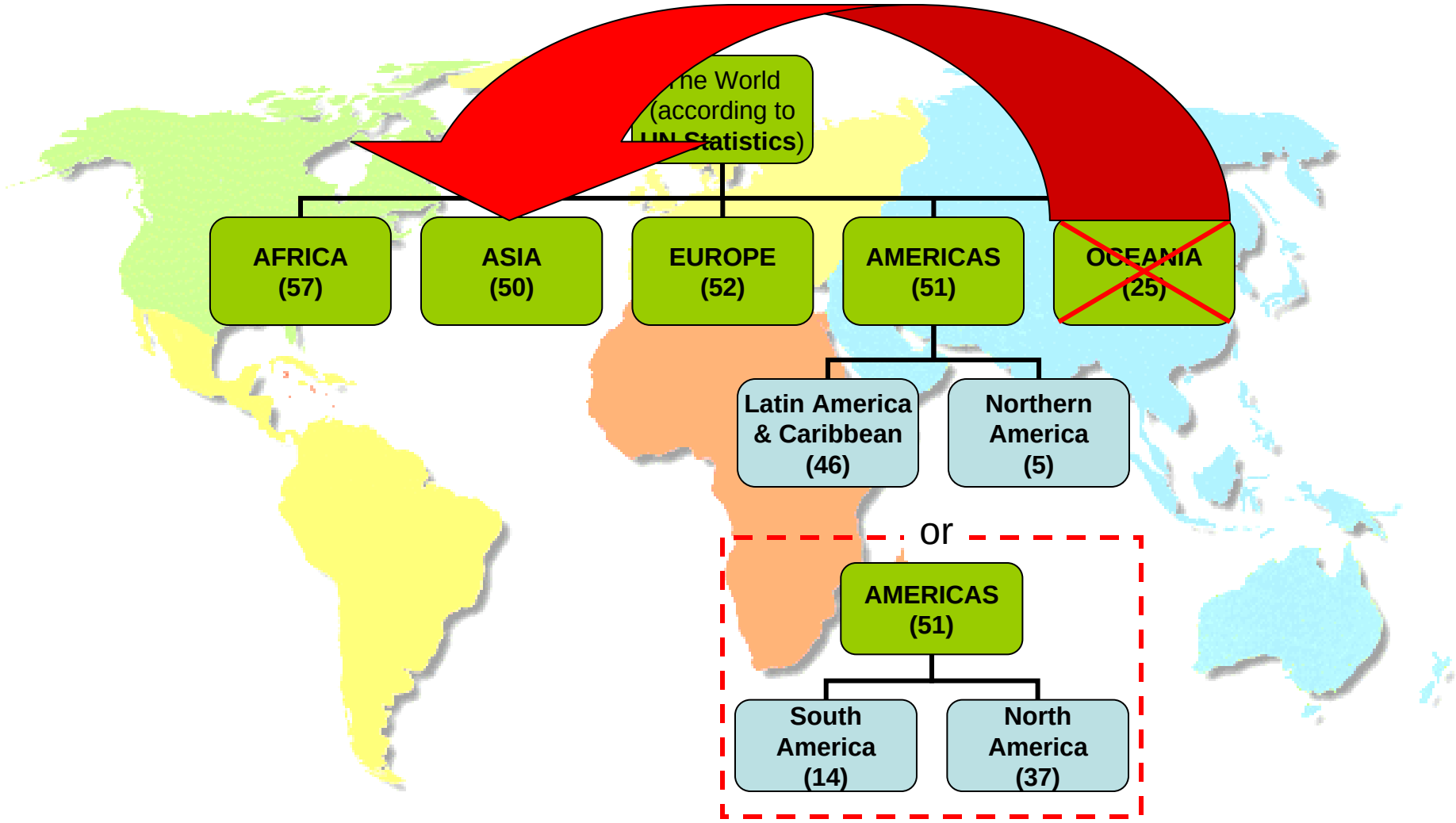

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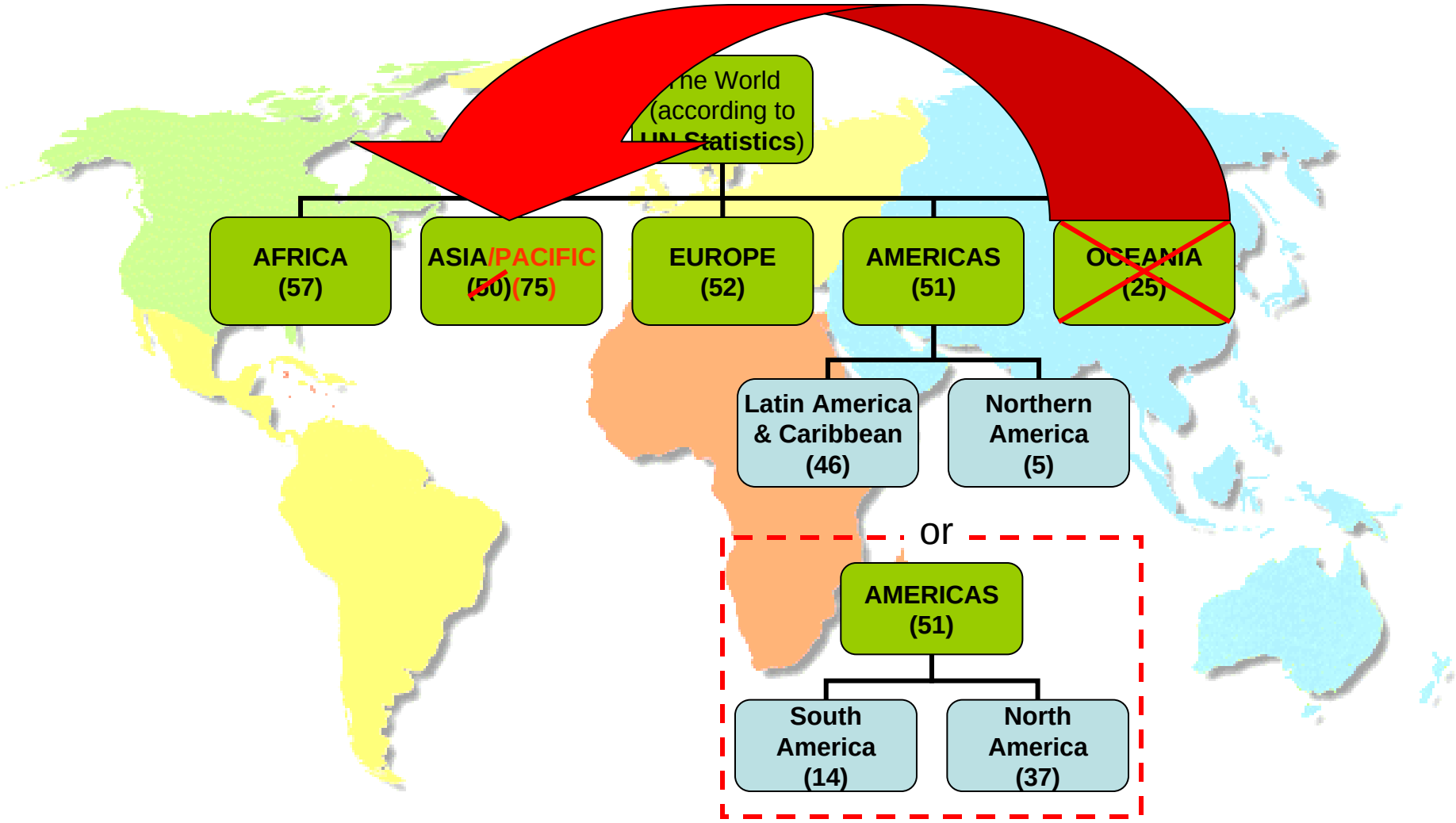

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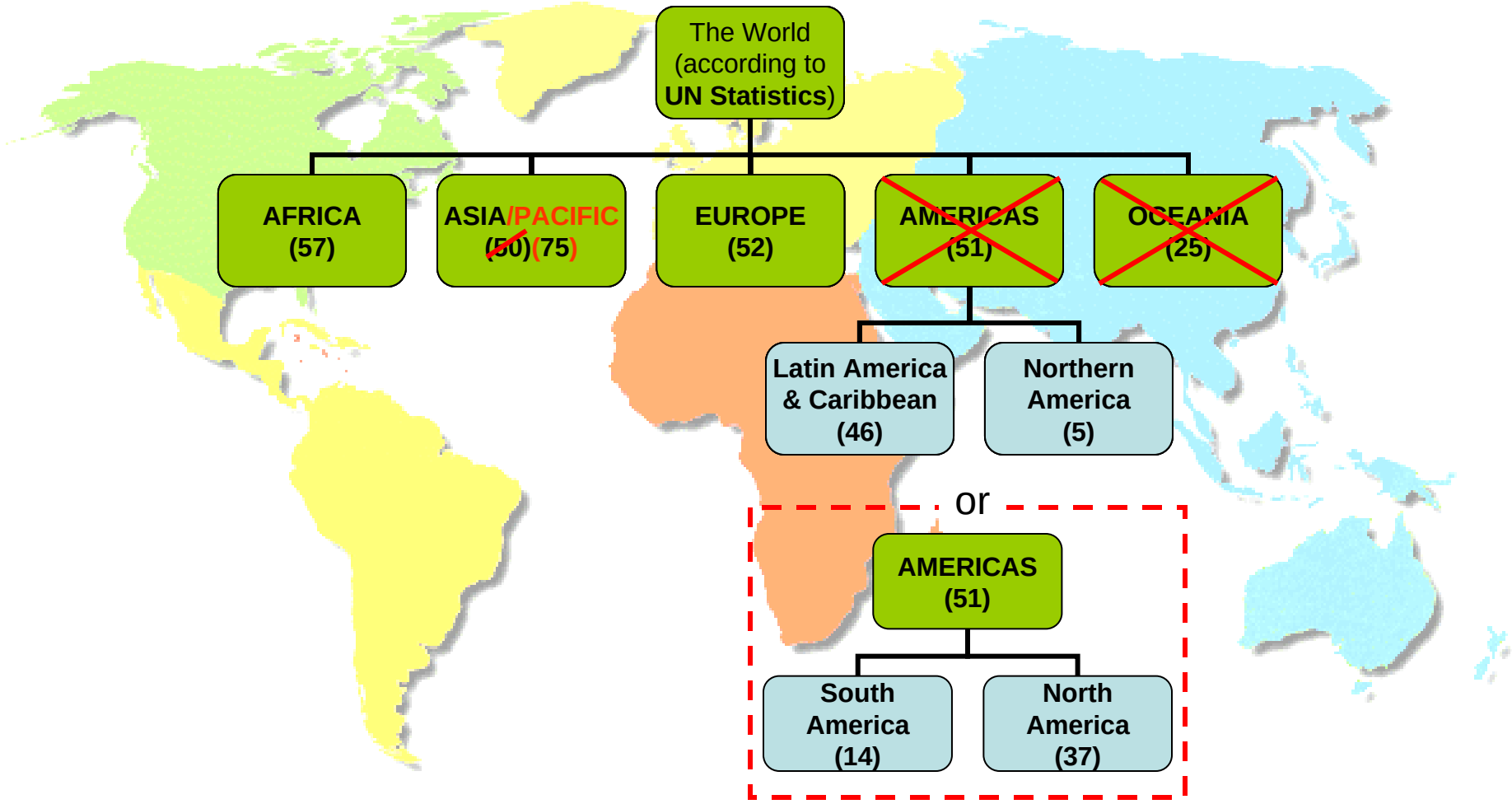

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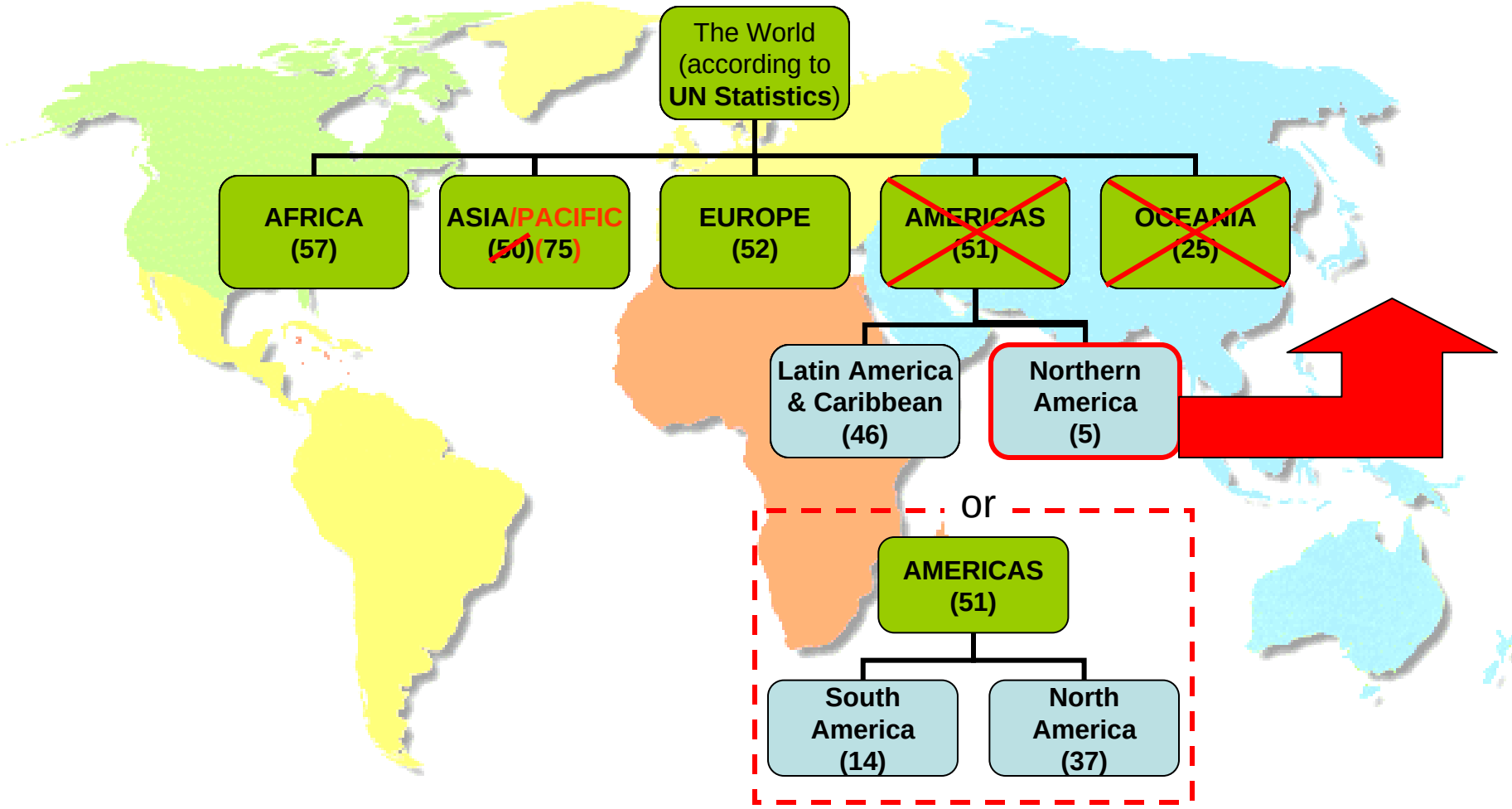

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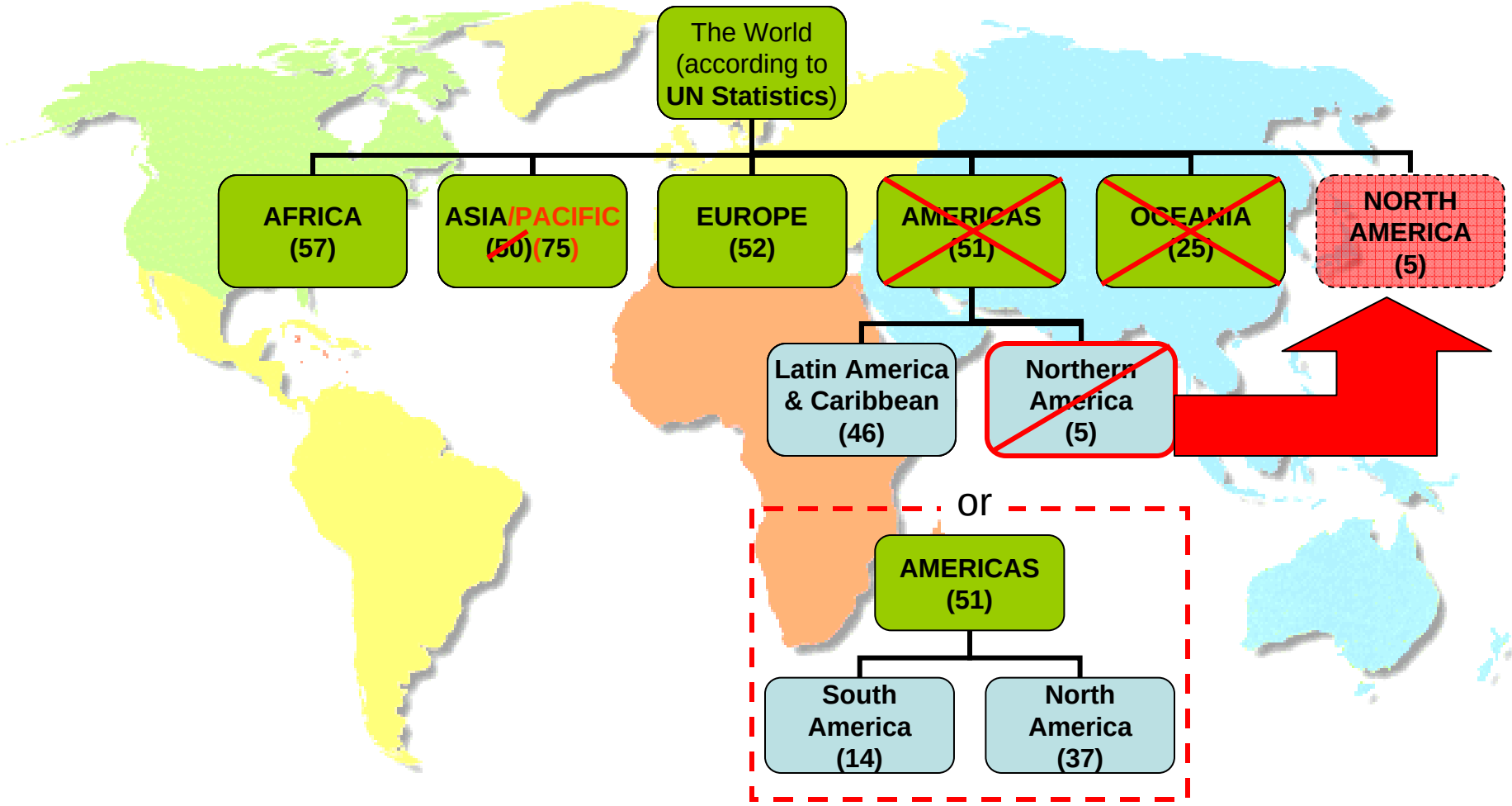

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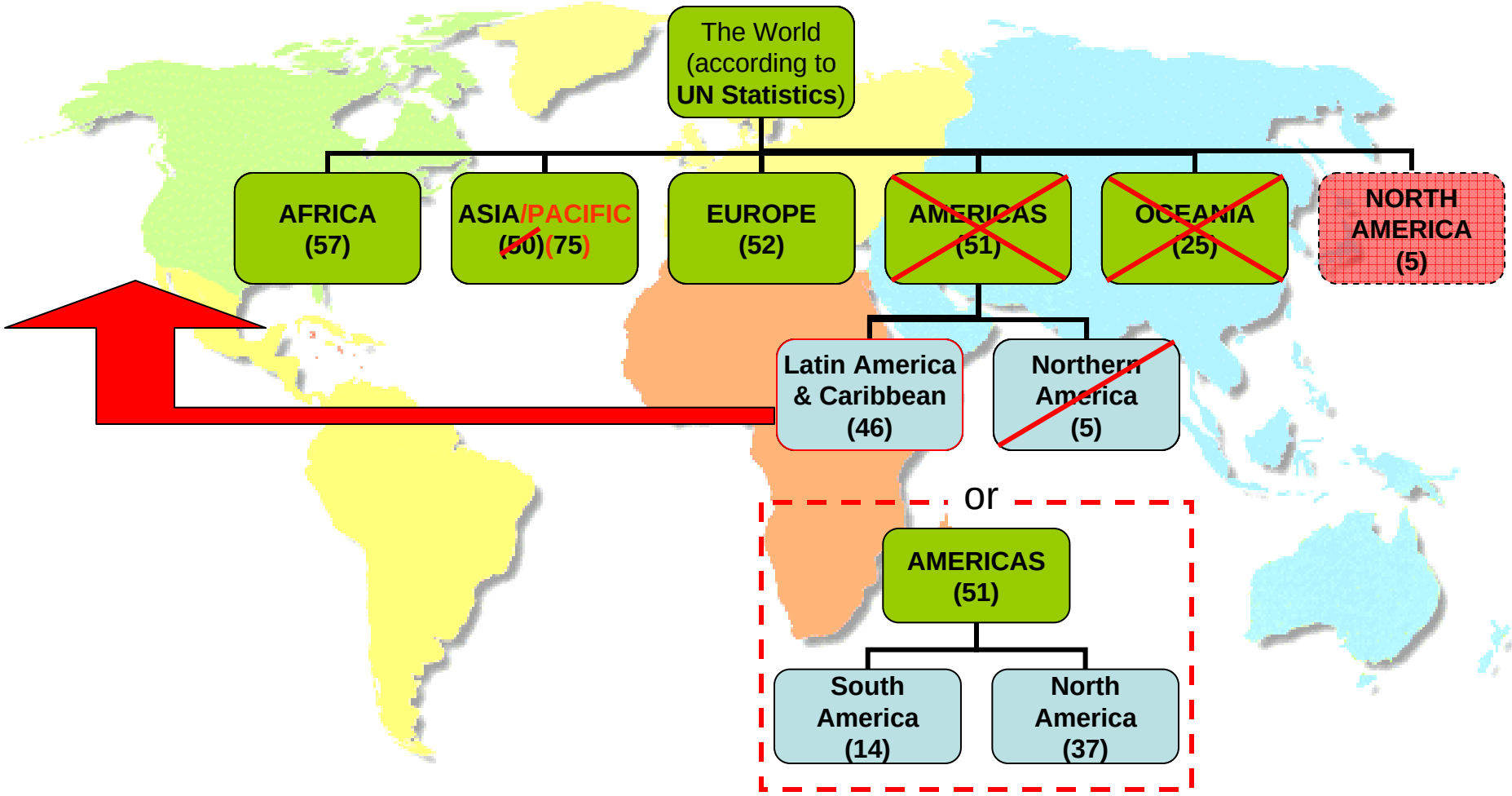

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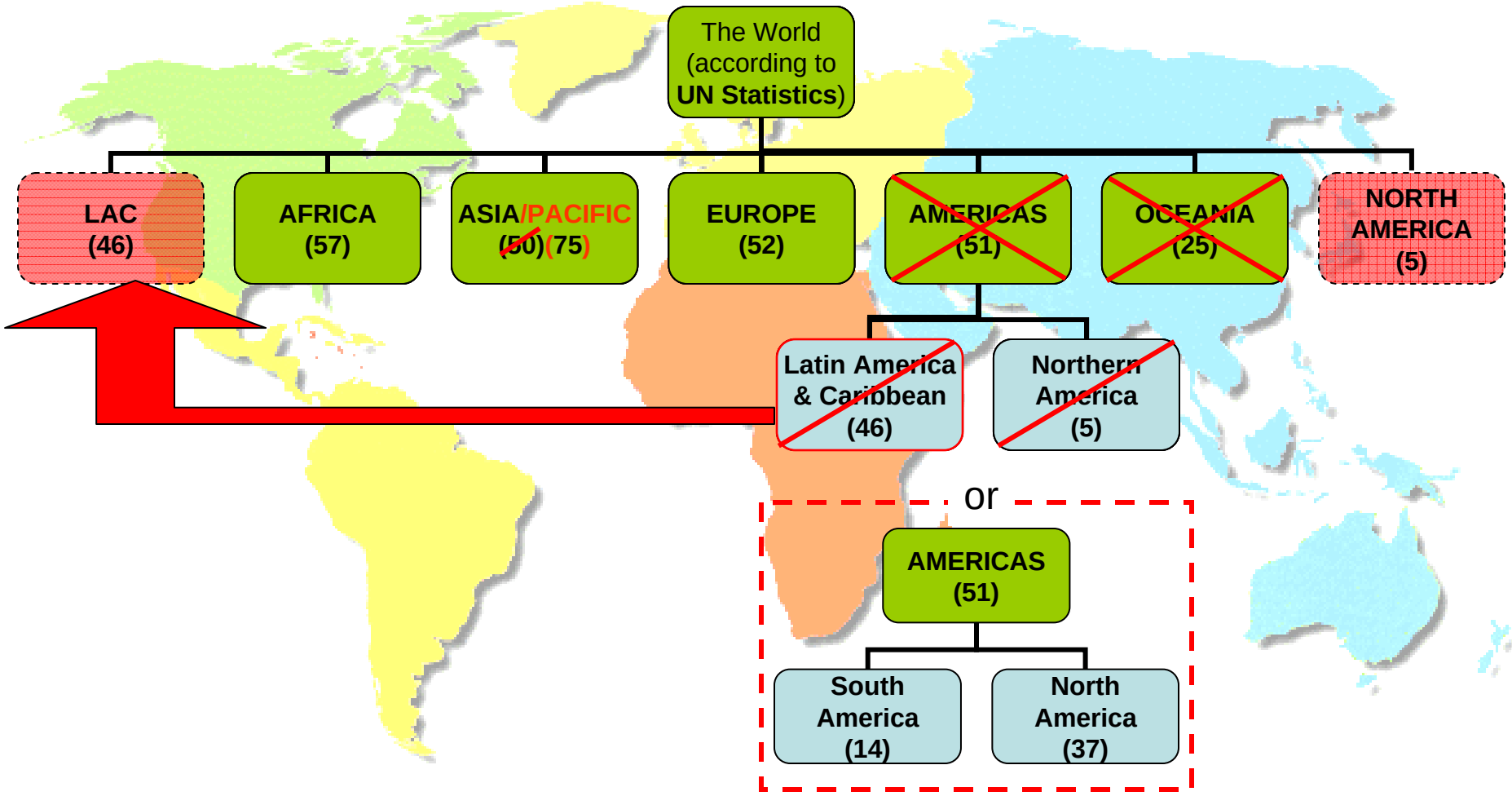

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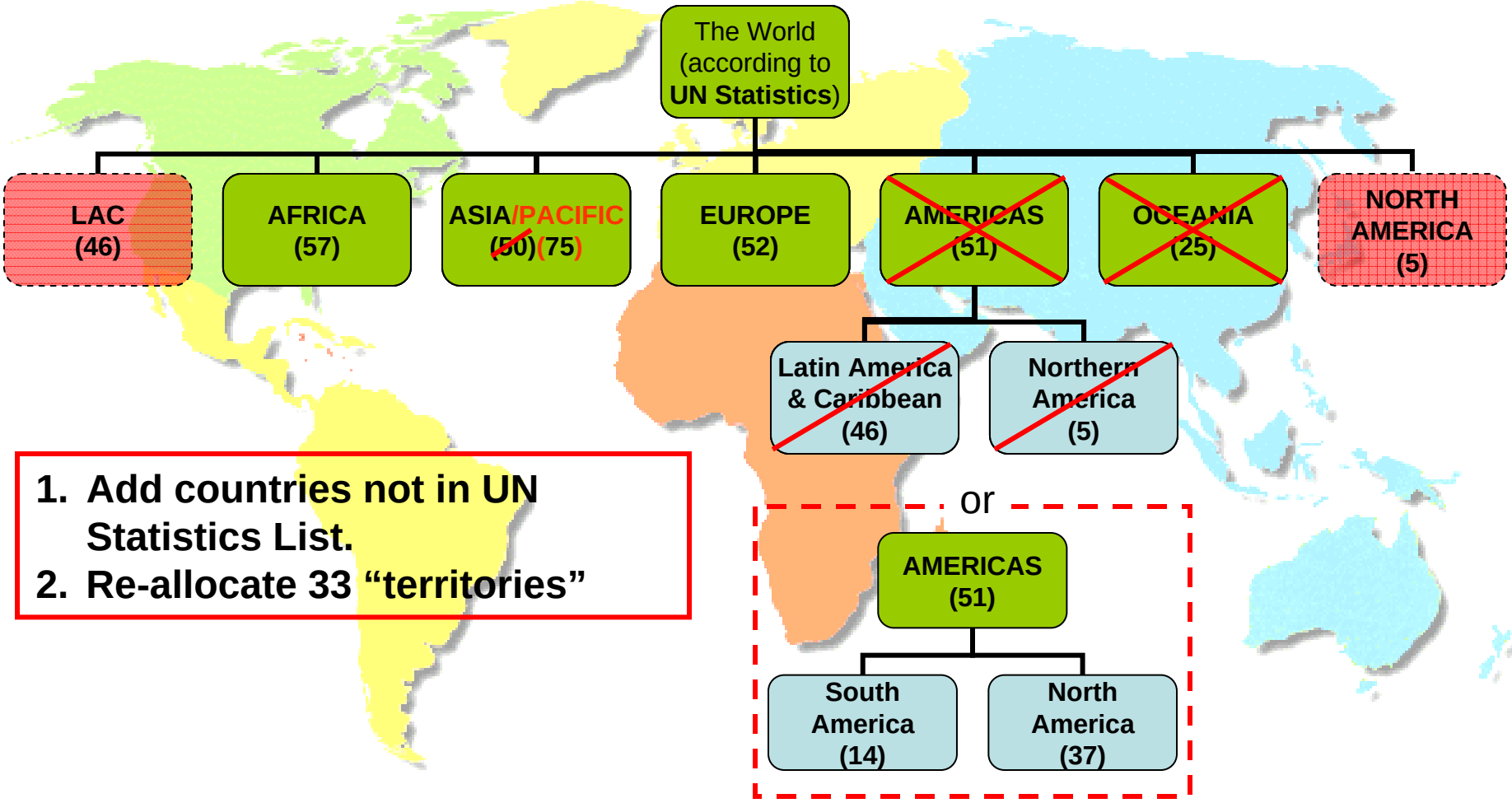

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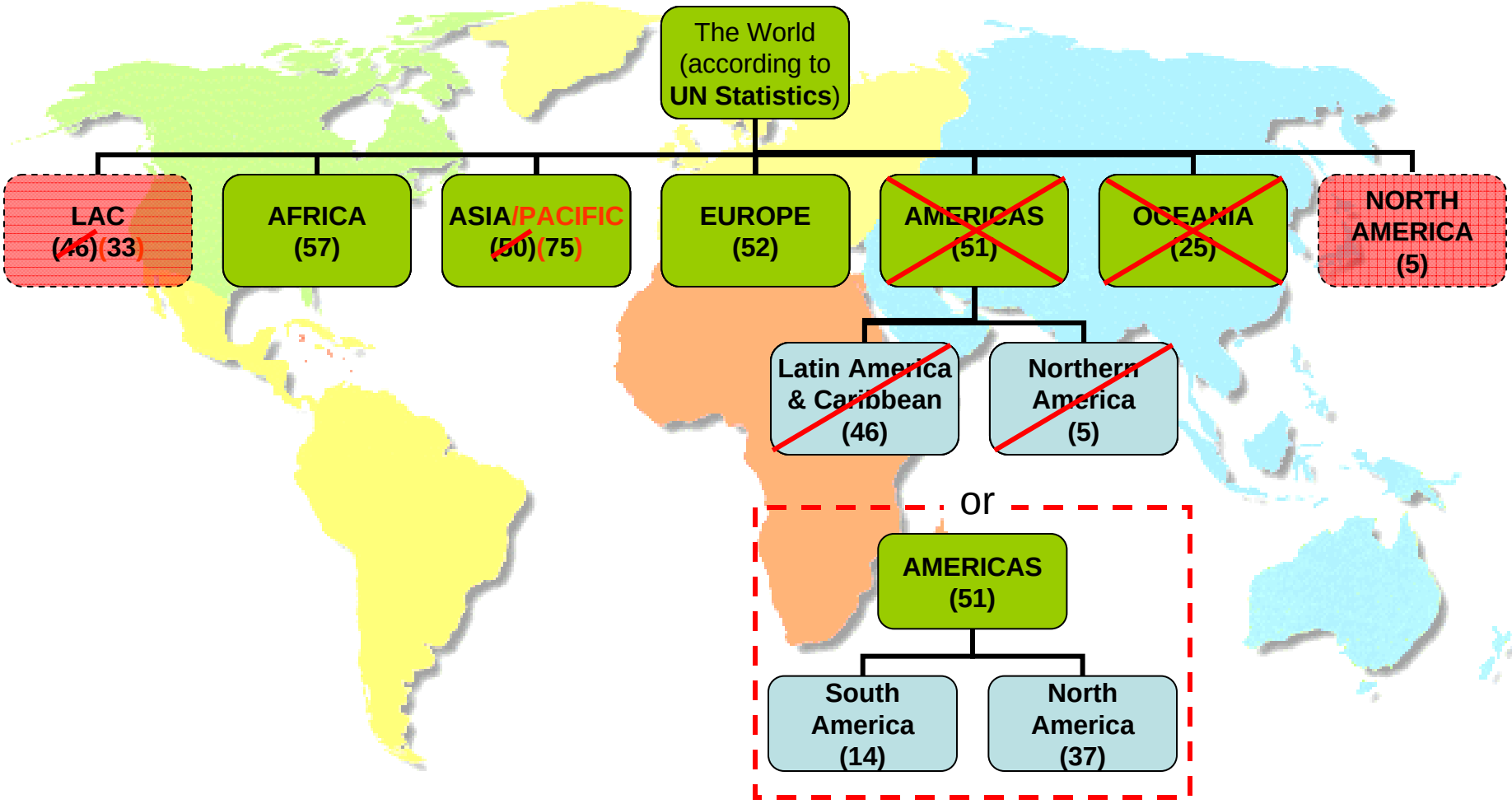

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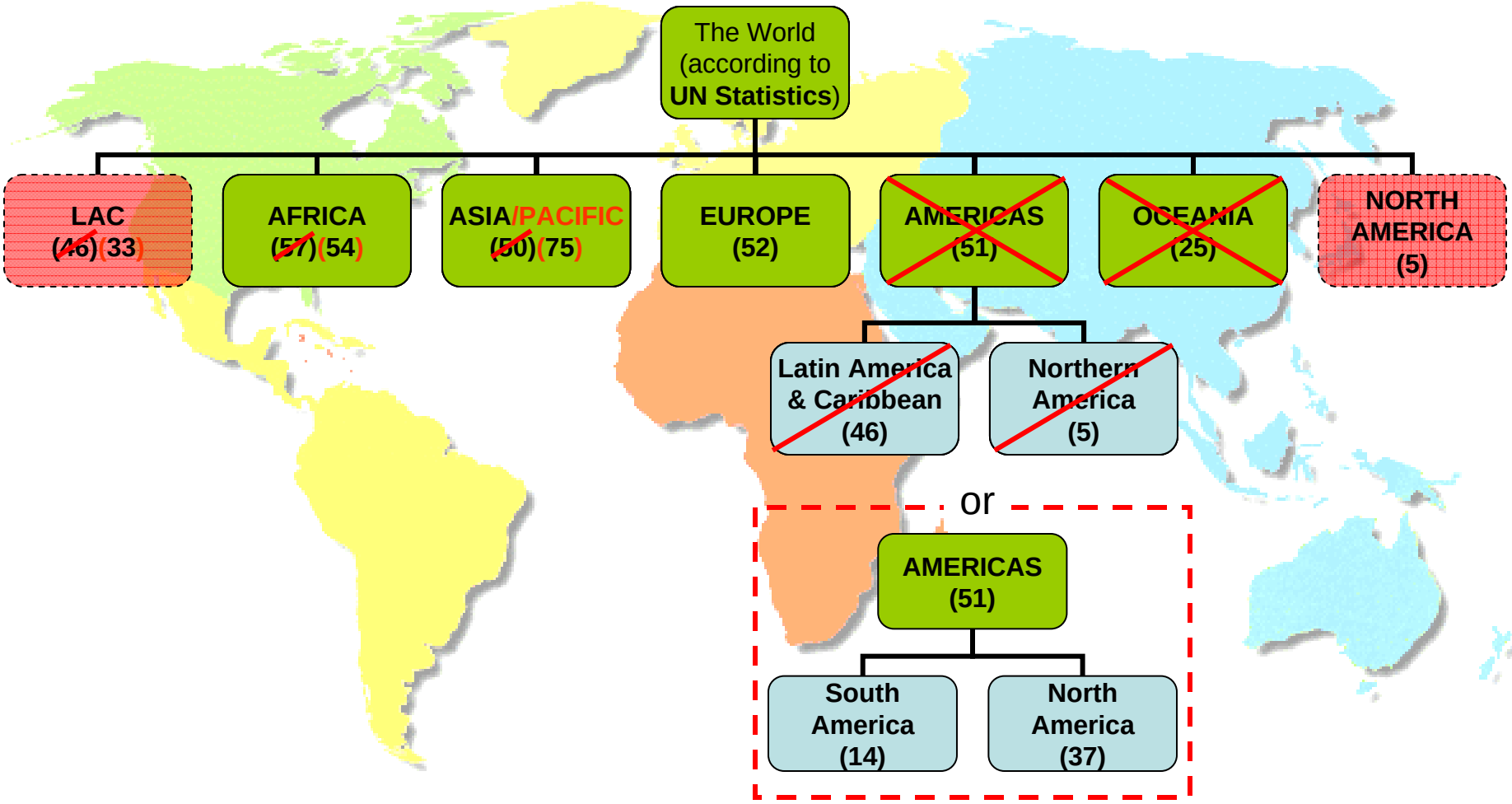

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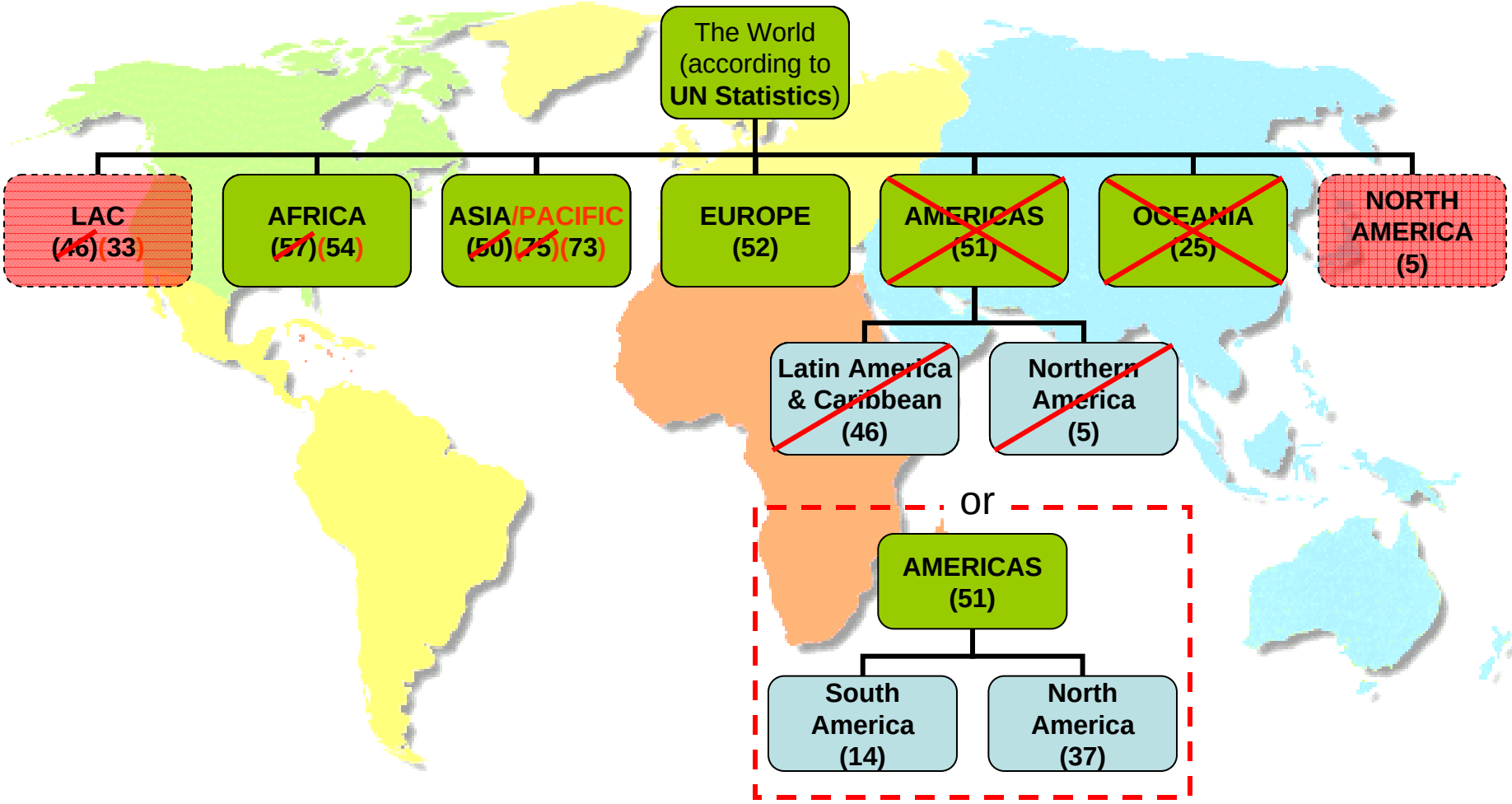

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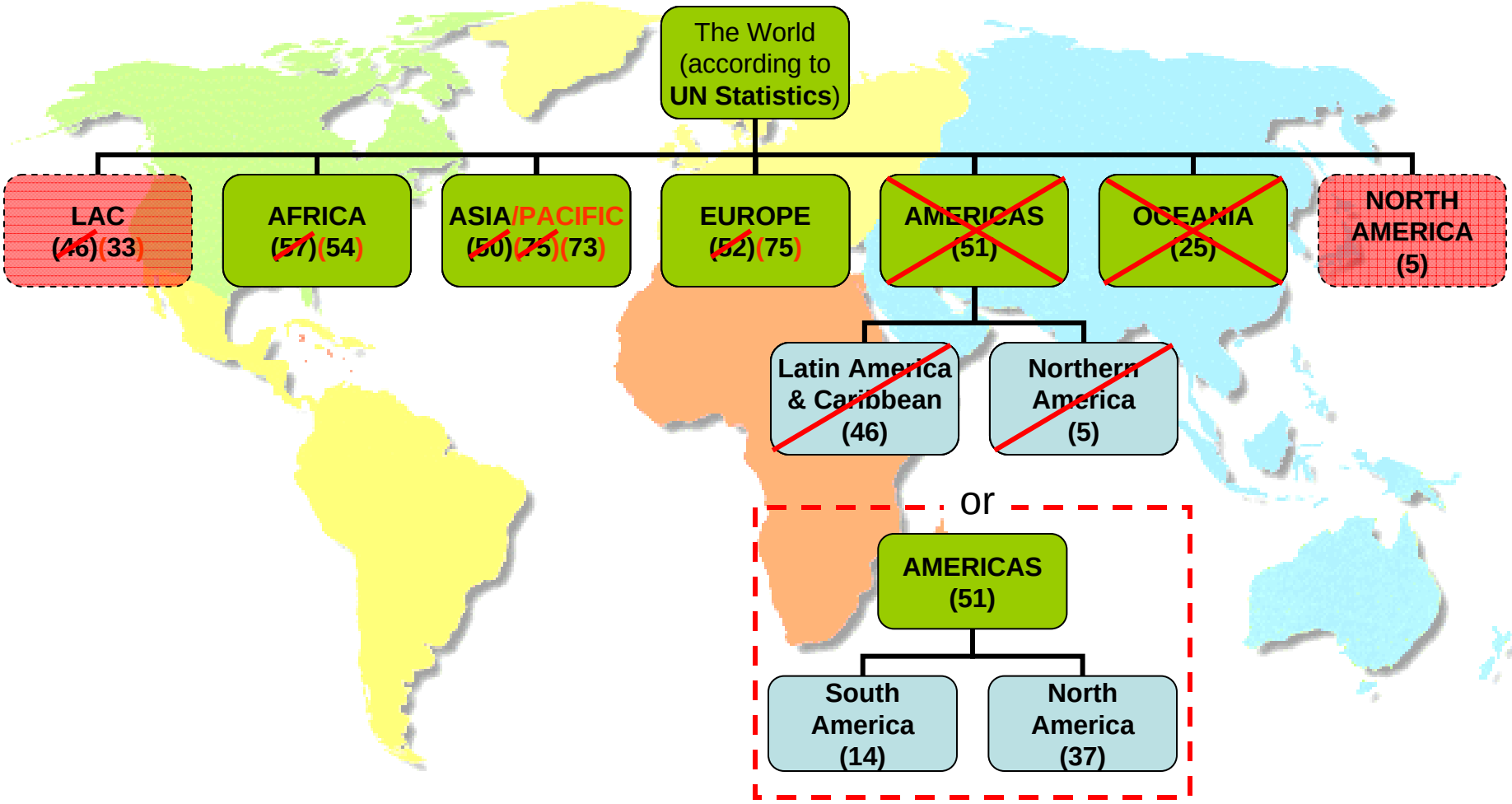

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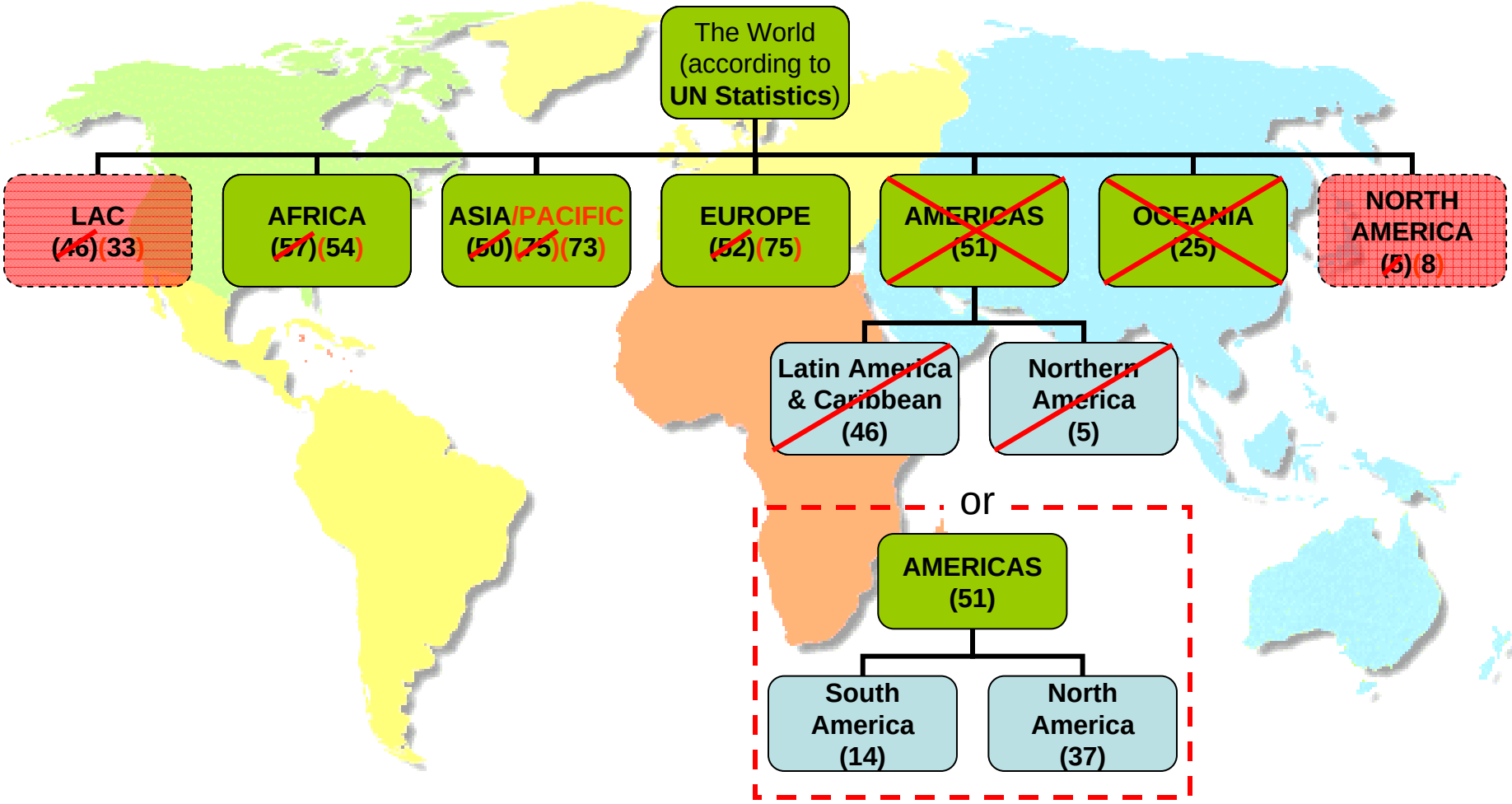

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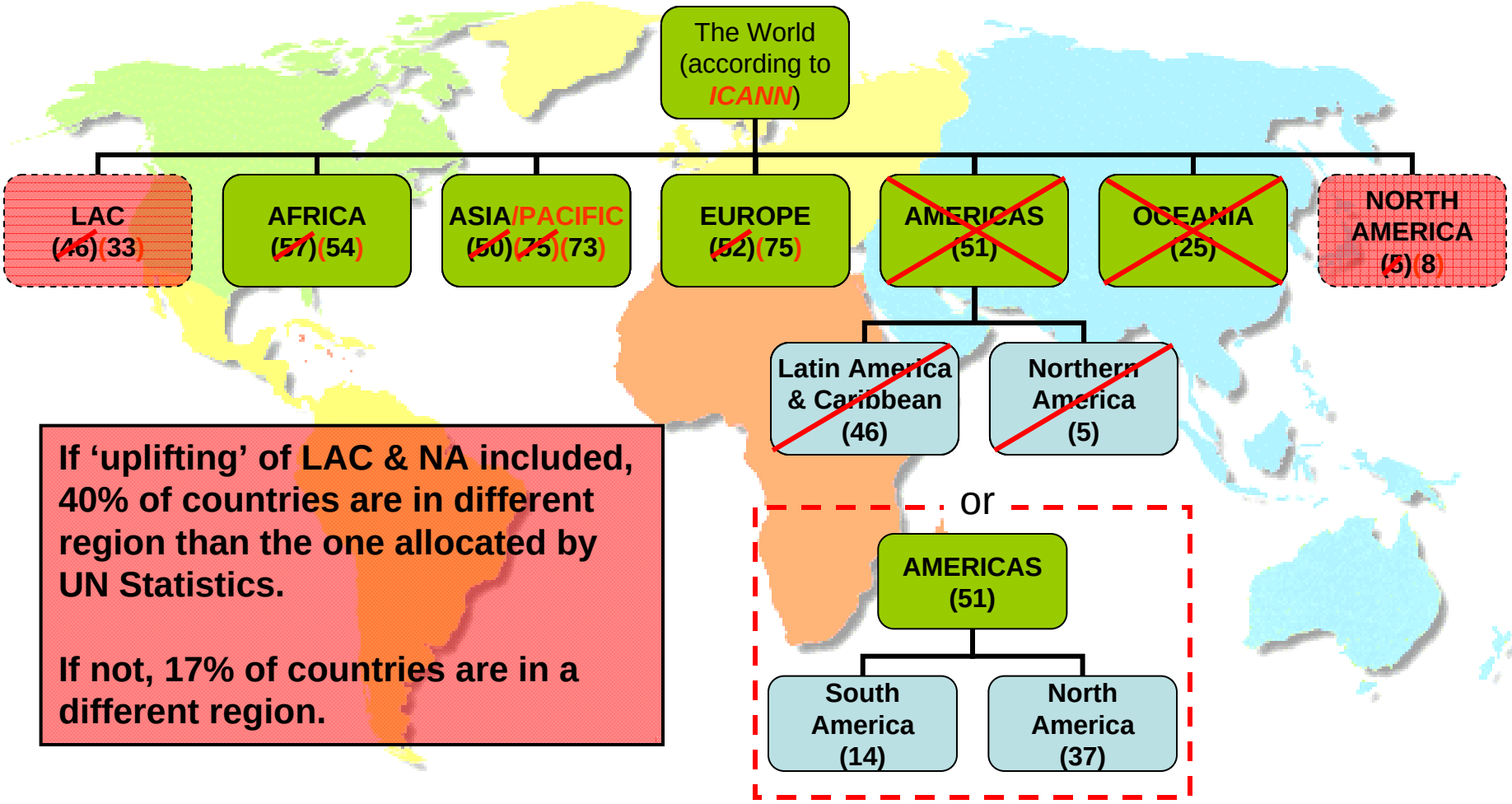


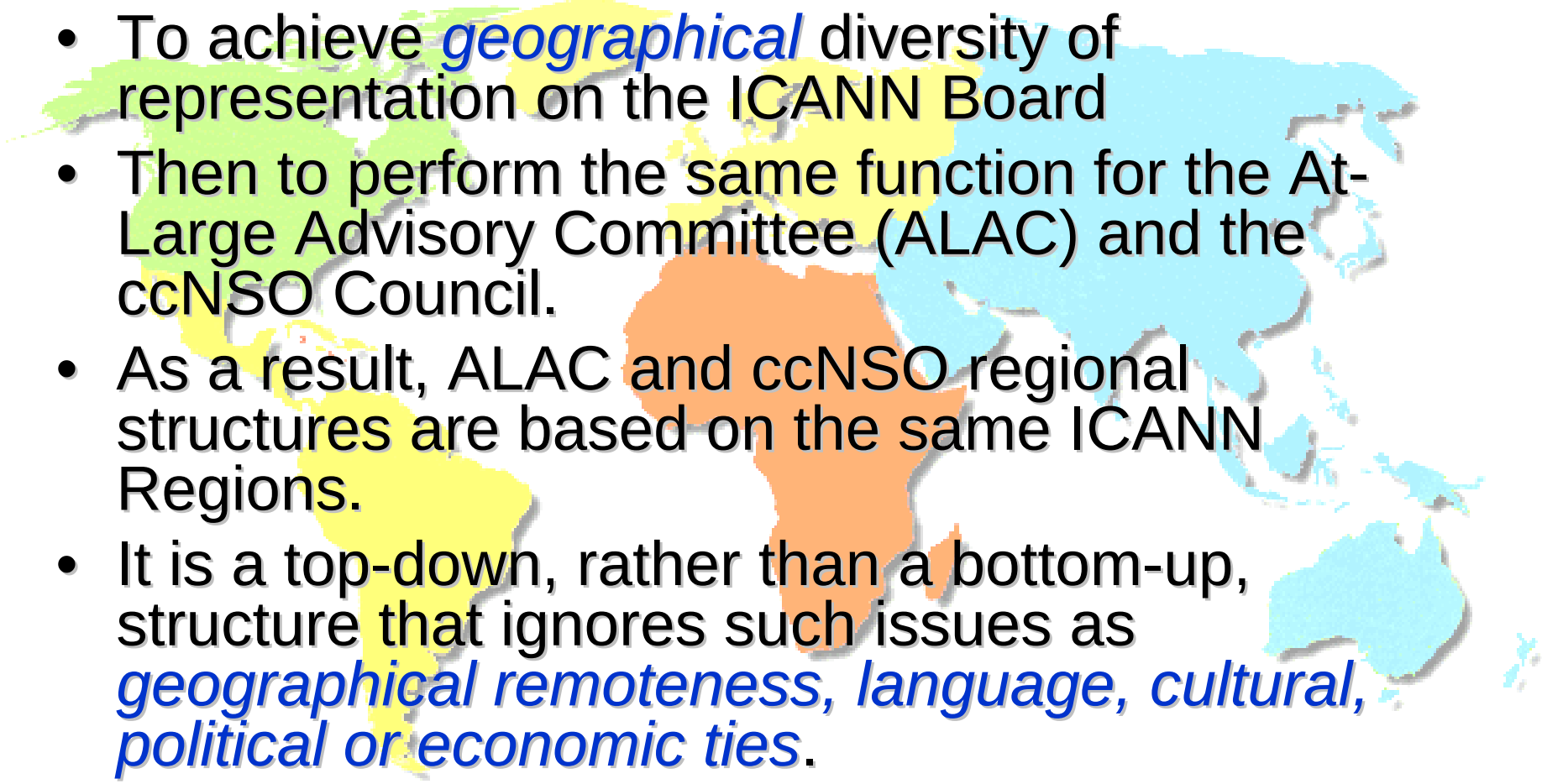
If 'uplifting' of LAC & NA included, 40% of countries are in different region than the one allocated by UN Statistics.

If not, 17% of countries are in a different region.

Can it be said that:

- this is still "*some independently prepared and authoritative list*"?
- the concept that "*persons from areas that are not countries would be grouped together with the country of citizenship for that area*" has been consistently applied?
- the allocations "*make reference to existing international norms for regional distribution of countries*"?
- countries are assigned "*to geographic regions on the basis of the United Nations Statistics Division's current classifications*"?

The Changing Objectives of Geographical Regions



- To achieve *geographical* diversity of representation on the ICANN Board
- Then to perform the same function for the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) and the ccNSO Council.
- As a result, ALAC and ccNSO regional structures are based on the same ICANN Regions.
- It is a top-down, rather than a bottom-up, structure that ignores such issues as *geographical remoteness, language, cultural, political or economic ties*.

An Alternative Perspective

- Shouldn't the Regional Structure support ICANN Core Value of "seeking and supporting broad, informed participation *reflecting the functional, geographic, and cultural diversity of the Internet*…."? Does it?
- Shouldn't it be about maximizing participation and representation, rather than inhibiting them?
- Should it therefore be built from the bottom-up, rather than the top-down?

Issue 1 – Geographic Remoteness

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Issue 2 (Language) & Issue 3 (Culture)

- Caribbean has 4 languages and cultures:
  - English (NA and/or EU)
  - French (EU)
  - Dutch (EU)
  - Spanish (LAC)
- Arab States have common language and culture, but no region

Issue 4 (Political) & Issue 5 (Economic) Ties

- Caribbean has:
  - Overseas Territories with differing relationships with “mother countries”
  - Independent Sovereign States
  - Political & Economic Unions (OECS & CARICOM)
- Arab League has 22 member states currently spread between AP and AF

Issues for the ccTLDs

- The majority, but not all, of the existing ccTLD community can probably live with the status quo – but what about the Internet community that is not yet involved with ICANN? Does the regional structure contribute to that lack of involvement?
- A small number of ccTLDs, typically from amongst the Dependent or Overseas Territories, consider they have been put in an inappropriate Region (without consultation).
- Others make a case for increasing the number of Regions from five to six or even seven.

Overseas Territory Example (1)

The Cayman Islands (.ky) is in the following Regions:

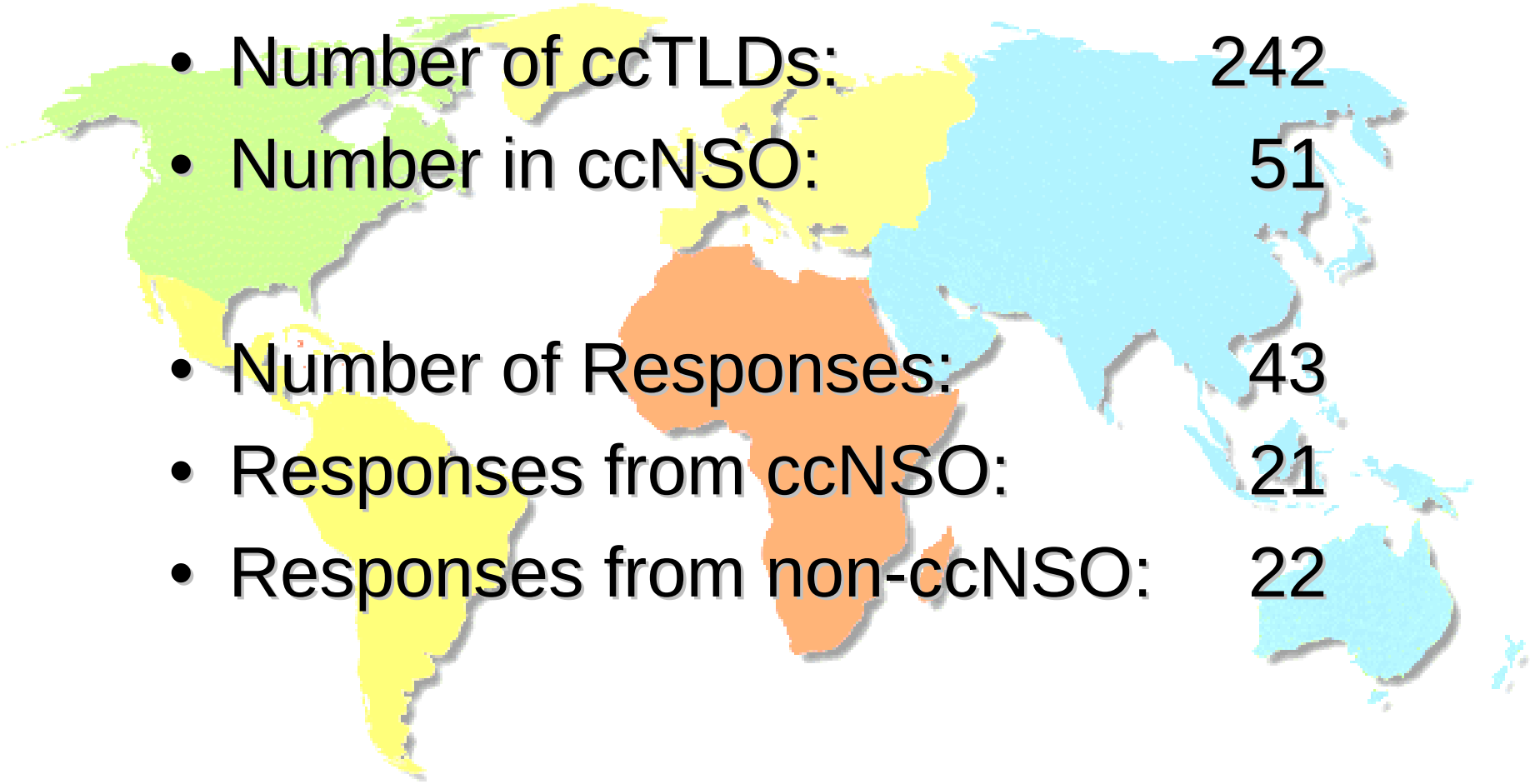
- physically, in the Western Caribbean
- the UN Statistics Office puts us in LAC, but we don't speak Spanish or Portuguese.
- but in note b/ to the same table, the UN states that North America comprises Northern America, Caribbean and Central America, so maybe we're in NA.
- not according to ICANN Bylaws – They say we're in EU.
- but ICANN's ASO, for "practical reasons", puts us under ARIN, together with the US and Canada
- our ICANN Regional Liaison Officer covers Canada and the Caribbean
- and finally our GAC representative wouldn't be in any Region, because the GAC doesn't have any.

Overseas Territory Example (2)

What are the consequences?

- Individual confusion
- No one from the Cayman Islands can realistically stand for election to the Councils of the ccNSO or ALAC, because they require to be nominated and elected by members of the EU Region - individuals they don't know and have never met.
- It would be impractical for anyone from Cayman to participate in, or benefit from, the work of a ccNSO European Regional Organisation or RALO
- Participation in the work of any other Region would not be officially recognised, and could have language, cultural or even political difficulties
- Particularly for small countries, it is difficult to participate in meetings associated with each of the different ICANN (and non-ICANN) regional structures.

The ccNSO Regions Survey



- Number of ccTLDs: 242
- Number in ccNSO: 51

- Number of Responses: 43
- Responses from ccNSO: 21
- Responses from non-ccNSO: 22

Survey Conclusions

- Of the responding ccTLDs, just over 80% think they are in the correct Region. The remainder do not, but the reasons are various. Clearly one solution doesn't fit all.
- The majority of respondents either actively support (40%) allowing ccTLDs to choose a different region, or don't mind if they do (40%).
- A third of all respondents think there should be more Regions (regions too large, or need for cultural identity), and a further third have no objections.
- 20% of responding ccTLDs consider the present regional structure impedes their participation in ICANN.

Working Group Conclusions

- Present allocation of “areas that are not countries” has confused sovereignty, nationality, citizenship and residency.
- Regional structures should facilitate rather than inhibit (as they do now) representation and participation.
- ICANN already has multiple regional structures. Is this a problem?
- One size doesn’t fit all. There is a need for greater flexibility.

Working Group Recommendations

- Obtain more input (e.g. this meeting and this afternoon's ccNSO meeting)
- Some issues much bigger than ccNSO alone, therefore ccNSO should provide input to ICANN Regions Review, e.g.
  - Wording of Board Resolution and Bylaws
  - The number and names of ICANN Regions
  - Impact on other areas of ICANN
  - Number of ICANN regional structures

Working Group Recommendations

- Within ccNSO
  - Give “areas that are not countries” the ability to choose their region for ccNSO purposes
    - Would require agreement of the relevant Government
    - Might be restricted to adjacent Regions
    - Might have restrictions on number of changes allowed
  - Perhaps extend this option to other countries at some point
  - Allow/encourage the creation of semi-formal sub-regional groups. Perhaps give official status to these at some point
  - Allow/encourage the creation of dynamic “issues based” groupings

Thank You!

Comments and Questions Please