

Network Working Group  
Internet-Draft  
Intended status: Standards Track  
Expires: July 4, 2016

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January 1, 2016

Deprecation of AS\_SET and AS\_CONFED\_SET in BGP  
draft-kumari-deprecate-as-set-confed-set-07

## Abstract

[RFC 6472](#) (i.e., [BCP 172](#)) recommends not using AS\_SET and AS\_CONFED\_SET in BGP. This document updates [RFC 4271](#) and proscribes the use of the AS\_SET and AS\_CONFED\_SET types of the AS\_PATH in BGPv4. This is done to simplify the design and implementation of BGP and to make the semantics of the originator of a route more clear. This will also simplify the design, implementation, and deployment of ongoing work in the Secure Inter-Domain Routing Working Group.

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## [1.](#) Introduction

[RFC 6472](#) (i.e., [BCP 172](#)) [[RFC6472](#)] makes a recommendation for not using AS\_SET and AS\_CONFED\_SET in BGP. This document advances the recommendation to a standards requirement in BGP. It updates [RFC 4271](#) and proscribes the use of the AS\_SET and AS\_CONFED\_SET types of the AS\_PATH in BGPv4.

The AS\_SET path segment type of the AS\_PATH attribute (Sections [4.3](#) and 5.1.2 of [[RFC4271](#)]) is created by a router that is performing route aggregation and contains an unordered set of Autonomous Systems (ASes) that the update has traversed. The AS\_CONFED\_SET path type ([[RFC5065](#)]) of the AS\_PATH attribute is created by a router that is performing route aggregation and contains an unordered set of Member AS Numbers in the local confederation that the update has traversed. It is very similar to AS\_SETs but is used within a confederation.

By performing aggregation, a router is, in essence, combining multiple existing routes into a single new route. This type of aggregation blurs the semantics of what it means to originate a route. Said aggregation can therefore cause operational issues, such as not being able to authenticate a route origin for the aggregate prefix in new BGP security technologies (such as those that take advantage of the "X.509 Extensions for IP Addresses and AS Identifiers" [[RFC3779](#)]). This in turn would result in reachability problems for the aggregated prefix and its components (i.e., more

specifics). Said aggregation also creates traffic engineering issues, because the precise path information for the component prefixes is not preserved.

From analysis of past Internet routing data, it is apparent that aggregation that involves AS\_SETs is very seldom used in practice on the public network [[Analysis](#)] and, when it is used, it is usually used incorrectly -- reserved AS numbers ([RFC1930](#)) and/or only a single AS in the AS\_SET are by far the most common case. Because the aggregation involving AS\_SETs is very rarely used, the reduction in table size provided by said aggregation is extremely small, and any advantage thereof is outweighed by additional complexity in BGP. As noted above, said aggregation also poses impediments to implementation of said new BGP security technologies.

In the past, AS\_SET had been used in a few rare cases to allow route aggregation where two or more providers could form the same prefix, using the exact match of the other's prefix in some advertisement and configuring the aggregation differently elsewhere. The key to configuring this correctly was to form the aggregate at the border in the outbound BGP policy and omit prefixes from the AS that the aggregate was being advertised to. The AS\_SET therefore allowed this practice without the loss of BGP's AS\_PATH loop protection. This use of AS\_SET served a purpose that fell in line with the original intended use. Without the use of AS\_SET, aggregates must always contain only less specific prefixes (not less than or equal to), and must never aggregate an exact match.

## [2.](#) Requirements Notation

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [[RFC2119](#)].

## [3.](#) Recommendation to Network Operators

Operators MUST NOT generate any new announcements containing AS\_SETs or AS\_CONFED\_SETs. If they have already announced routes with AS\_SETs or AS\_CONFED\_SETs in them, then they MUST withdraw those routes and re-announce routes for the component prefixes (i.e., the

more-specific of the previously aggregated prefix) without AS\_SETs or CONFED\_SETs in the updates. This involves undoing the aggregation that was previously performed (with AS\_SETs/CONFED\_SETs), and announcing more specifics (without AS\_SETs/CONFED\_SETs). Route aggregation that was previously performed by proxy aggregation (i.e., without the use of AS\_SETs) is still possible under some conditions. As with any change, the operator should understand the full implications of the change.

It is worth noting that new technologies (such as those that take advantage of the "X.509 Extensions for IP Addresses and AS Identifiers" [[RFC3779](#)]) might not support routes with AS\_SETs/

AS\_CONFED\_SETs in them, and may treat as infeasible routes containing them. Future BGP implementations may also do the same. It is expected that, even before the deployment of these new or future technologies, operators may filter routes with AS\_SETs/AS\_CONFED\_SETs in them. Other than making that observation, this document is not intended to make any recommendation for how an operator should behave when receiving a route with AS\_SET or AS\_CONFED\_SET in it. This document's focus is entirely on the sender side, as discussed in the preceding paragraph.

#### [4.](#) IANA Considerations

This document requires no IANA actions.

#### [5.](#) Security Considerations

This document obsoletes the use of aggregation techniques that create AS\_SETs or AS\_CONFED\_SETs. Future work, intended for securing BGP, may update the protocol to remove support for the AS\_SET and AS\_CONFED\_SET path segment type of the AS\_PATH attribute. This future work will remove complexity and code that are not exercised very often, thereby decreasing the attack surface.

#### [6.](#) Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Tony Li, Randy Bush, John Scudder, Curtis Villamizar, Danny McPherson, Chris Morrow, Tom Petch, and Ilya Varlashkin, as well as Douglas Montgomery, Enke Chen, Florian Weimer, Jakob Heitz, John Leslie, Keyur Patel, Paul Jakma, Rob Austein, Russ

Housley, Sandra Murphy, Steve Bellovin, Steve Kent, Steve Padgett, Alfred Hoenes, Alvaro Retana, everyone in the IDR working group, and everyone else who provided input.

Apologies to those who we may have missed; it was not intentional.

## 7. References

### 7.1. Normative References

- [RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 2119](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC2119, March 1997, <<http://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2119>>.

### 7.2. Informative References

#### [Analysis]

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Expires July 4, 2016

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January 2016

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