Position Paper for IAB Workshop on IP Address Geolocation (ipgeows)

Applicant: Om Prakash Sharma
Role: Application Developer | Lead AI/ML Engineer
Affiliation: acAIberry.io | Nepal Cloud Professionals
Email: ompie.py@gmail.com

1. Introduction

As an application developer and AI/ML engineer, I frequently integrate IP address–based services into real-world applications, ranging from **educational platforms and content delivery systems** to **cloud-native applications deployed across multi-cloud environments**. My experience spans both **user-facing applications** and **infrastructure-level orchestration**, which has given me insight into the strengths and shortcomings of IP geolocation today.

I am particularly interested in contributing to this workshop from the perspective of a **developer building applications for diverse and bandwidth-constrained regions such as Nepal**, where **user privacy, localization accuracy, and accessibility** are often at odds with each other.

2. Today's Use Cases

From my experience, IP geolocation is used in several areas:

- **Content delivery & access control**: Video streaming platforms and CDNs rely on IP geolocation to enforce regional licensing and optimize latency.
- **Security & fraud detection**: IP-geo data is frequently used to detect anomalies in user logins or flag suspicious activities.
- **Localization**: Applications adapt languages, currencies, and even regulatory notices based on detected location.
- **Education platforms**: In my current work, geolocation helps in tailoring **e-learning content distribution**, ensuring compliance with regional education policies.

These are vital but often **rely on heuristics with imperfect accuracy**.

3. Gaps and Problems

- **Accuracy issues in developing countries**: In Nepal, IP blocks are often misattributed to incorrect cities or even neighboring countries. This creates problems for services like **online banking, e-learning access, or CDN optimization**.

- **Privacy trade-offs**: While IP-geo provides utility, it often exposes more location information than users expect. This is particularly concerning for youth and vulnerable populations in digital literacy programs I've worked on.

- **Lack of transparency in databases**: Developers rely on third-party geolocation providers, but the update frequency, source data, and error rates are rarely disclosed.

- **File formats and interoperability**: CSV and JSON are widely used but lack standardization in schema, leading to inconsistencies when integrating across multiple providers.

4. Future Opportunities

I believe the future of geolocation should explore:

- **Hybrid approaches**: Combining **network signals (cell towers, WiFi, ISP hints)** with IP-geo to improve accuracy, especially in regions where IP allocation is inconsistent.
- **Privacy-preserving mechanisms**: Allowing **coarse location hints** (e.g., country or region-level only) without exposing exact user geographies.
- **Standardization of data formats**: Establishing **open schemas for IP-geo data** with versioning and trust metadata would simplify integration for developers.
- **Alternative identifiers**: Instead of relying only on IP addresses, developers could benefit from **network type indicators** (e.g., fiber, satellite, cellular) that help optimize application delivery without tying it directly to a location.

5. Conclusion

As an application developer and AI/ML engineer, I see IP geolocation as both a **powerful enabler** and a **barrier to inclusivity and privacy**. My contribution to the workshop would be to bring in perspectives from:

- **Developers working in bandwidth- and infrastructure-limited environments**
- **Use cases in education, security, and content delivery**
- **The tension between localization accuracy and user privacy**

I am keen to participate in discussions and breakout sessions, and I hope to contribute towards **designing future geolocation mechanisms** that are **developer-friendly, privacy-respecting, and globally inclusive**.