

Cairo, 5 November 2008
GAC Communiqué – Cairo

I. INTRODUCTION

The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) met in Cairo, during November 2- 5, 2008.

48 members, 3 observers and one invited country, Russia, participated in the meeting.

The Governmental Advisory Committee expresses warm thanks to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of Egypt for hosting the meeting in Cairo and ICANN for supporting the GAC meeting.

II. IDN ccTLDs

The GAC welcomes the release of the Draft Implementation Plan for the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process which represents a good basis for further discussions.

The GAC considers it important to receive further information on the issues outlined in Module 7 of the Draft Implementation Plan including a draft text for the proposed agreement intended to determine the relationship between ICANN and potential IDN ccTLD operators. That would allow the GAC to advance its position on this issue. The GAC emphasizes that every effort should be made to avoid situations where problems regarding the formalization and finalization of agreements would prevent or delay a legitimate applicant from introducing an IDN ccTLD.

In addition, the charging of fees for the IDN ccTLD fast track process should be examined further to ensure that it does not constitute an additional difficulty for participation in this process.

The GAC considers it would be useful to have further examination of the geographic names issues associated with the implementation of the IDN ccTLD fast track process and the new gTLDs including the proposal outlined in the

ccNSO's resolution of 31 October 2007, relating to the consideration of country and territory names in the new gTLD process.

III. New gTLDs

Due to the late posting of the Draft Applicant Guidebook, the GAC is not in a position to provide substantive comments at this stage. The GAC intends to provide comments at the latest by the next ICANN meeting in Mexico.

The GAC appreciates the level of engagement inter-sessionally with ICANN staff which lead to better reflection of the GAC principles on New gTLDs in the Draft Applicant Guidebook, particularly principles 2.2 and 2.6. As a result of this exchange and subsequent meeting with the ccNSO, the GAC became more sensitive to the potential blurring of the existing distinction between the ccTLD and gTLD namespace.

Questions related to the consideration of country and territory names need to be addressed further. The GAC will continue consideration of whether the strings being meaningful representations or abbreviations of a country and territory name in any script or language should not be allowed in the gTLD space until the related ccTLD policy development processes have been completed.

The procedure recommended in 2.7a of the GAC principles also needs to be further considered at the Draft Applicant Guidebook.

IV. GAC input to the PSC report

In line with its communiqué of the Paris meeting, the GAC has progressed in the preparation of its input to the PSC process, including on the role of governments.

V. WHOIS

In its meetings with the GNSO and the ICANN Board, the GAC expressed disappointment that no substantive progress has been made in response to its March 2007 request for studies on the uses and misuses of WHOIS data. The GAC welcomed the status report provided by the Board and asked that it be converted into a more formal written response. The GAC also invited the Board to reflect on alternative ways to address the GAC's request.

VI. DNS vulnerability and DNSSEC

The GAC received informative presentations on DNS vulnerabilities and DNSSEC and looks forward to further engagement with the SSAC on these issues.

It is understood that a greater interaction between ICANN and the main bodies responsible for generating security-related standards and protocols could provide a more integrated approach on security issues.

VII. ICANN meeting reform proposal

The GAC input to ICANN's meeting reform proposal is attached to the communiqué.

In its discussions with the Board, the GAC emphasized the difficulties faced by GAC members in providing advice to ICANN on matters where documentation is only available immediately prior to ICANN meetings and only in English.

VIII. Geographic Regions

The GAC supports the proposal to create a community wide working group to consider the issues raised in the ICANN Geographical Regions report prepared by the ccNSO Regions Working Group.

IX. Work Program 2009

The GAC identified the following priorities for 2009:

- IDN ccTLD, including fast track
- new gTLD
- IPv4 to IPv6 transition,
- security and stability of the DNS,
- evolution of ICANN

The work program is subject to review and will be adjusted as challenges arise.

X. Elections

Mr Janis Karklins, from Latvia, was re-elected to the position of Chair of the GAC. Mr Bertrand de La Chapelle, from France, was re-elected to the position of Vice Chair. Ms Manal Ismail, from Egypt, and Mr Jayantha Fernando, from Sri Lanka, were elected to the positions of Vice Chairs.

The decision is effective from the end of the first meeting of 2009.

The GAC thanks Ms Maimouna Diop Diange from Senegal and Mr Everton Lucero from Brazil for their service in capacity of Vice Chairs and their outstanding contribution to the work of the GAC.

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The GAC warmly thanks all those among the ICANN community who have contributed to the dialogue with GAC in Cairo.

The next GAC meeting will be during the period of the ICANN meeting in Mexico City, Mexico.

Cairo, 5 November 2008

GAC comments on ICANN's meeting policy

ICANN has initiated a discussion regarding its meeting policy, by posting an issue paper on May 16¹ and opening an online forum for comments². The issue was also addressed during the Paris meeting Open Forum. The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) offers the following comments to colleagues in other constituencies and to the ICANN Board as a contribution to this important discussion.

Main comments

1. The number of participants and the diversity of issues addressed at ICANN meetings have significantly grown since the creation of the organization ten years ago. But the current rhythm of three events a year represents an important financial and time commitment for all stakeholders, particularly in the context of the growing number of other Internet-related processes they also must participate in. **Moving towards two events a year would clearly reduce this burden.**
2. However, physical meetings are essential for broad community interaction. They represent a critical part of ICANN's functioning and multi-stakeholder nature. Moreover, a critical focus on ICANN's agenda in recent months has been "transparency and accountability" in the policy development process, a key aspect of which is to conduct business and make decisions – to the greatest extent possible – in the public eye. Accordingly, and given ICANN's current working methods, **it is feared that an immediate reduction to two meetings will only slow down processes and reduce transparency and accountability.**
3. Furthermore, the ICANN community will have to take action next year on three issues with important consequences for the future (the first call for new gTLDs, the IDN ccTLD fast-track and the Transition Action Plan) and **regular face-to-face interaction during 2009 is critical.**
4. In that context, **improving further ICANN's working methods should be the immediate priority**, as it would reduce the need for frequent face-to-face global meetings and therefore help achieve the ultimate objective of lighter travel commitments required from ICANN participants. A list of issues to address in that respect is indicated below to foster further discussion.
5. **Regional meetings** are useful outreach and awareness-raising opportunities that deserve to be encouraged: they can in particular facilitate discussions of policy and implementation issues of local interest. But they should not pre-empt discussions on issues that must be addressed at the global level. Such regional meetings would benefit from being co-hosted with regional actors. Actually, constituency-based meetings already take place extensively at regional level, including among RIRs or, for ccTLD issues, through CENTR and APTLD. These meetings prepare a lot of the constituency input for ICANN processes at the global level. Any additional ICANN regional initiatives must complement (provide added value to) and take into account existing constituency initiatives.

¹ <http://www.icann.org/en/meetings/meetings-reform-discussion-paper-16may08-en.pdf>

² <http://forum.icann.org/lists/meeting-consultation-2008/> and summary:
<http://forum.icann.org/lists/meeting-consultation-2008/msg00011.html>

6. Likewise, **thematic intersessional meetings** are often necessary to advance consensus on specific issues (for instance within ad hoc working groups) and to increase the involvement of actors who do not participate in the general ICANN meetings. However, in order to foster transparency and accountability, such thematic inter-sessional meetings should always seek to take advantage of other existing events to facilitate multi-stakeholder participation and be more clearly integrated in the policy development process. Experience shows that they are less a replacement for the general meetings than a complement to ensure that annual meetings can be devoted to the most pressing or delicate issues. Intersessional work should also involve conference calls and online discussion, as practiced already at constituency level.
7. Finally, recent experiences have demonstrated that **holding meetings in travel hubs facilitates participation and reduces travel and time costs**. This should be encouraged, irrespective of the final number of annual meetings. The principle of regional rotation should however be maintained. It is therefore recommended to hold one meeting a year at least in a rotating roster of major hub destinations (3-5 for each region), while keeping the current policy of call for candidatures for the other meeting(s) in the near term. An early planning would also facilitate application for visas by participants.

The GAC recommends that a portion of the agenda for the Mexico City meeting in March 2009 be devoted to a Community-wide discussion of these issues. They must be addressed in a holistic approach in order to improve further the efficiency of ICANN's unique multi-stakeholder model and institutional confidence in the organization.

Issues to be discussed further in this context

As mentioned above, discussion on the meeting policy cannot be separated from other issues regarding working methods during and between ICANN meetings. The following elements, *inter alia*, should be addressed as part of the supporting reforms necessary before envisaging a reduction of the number of annual meetings.

Meeting structure and purpose

Physical meetings are unique opportunities for direct interaction between all stakeholder groups and the ICANN Board. The meeting structure should also appropriately balance discussions within constituencies, within SOs or ACs and among all actors, to make the best use of the limited time and avoid the "silo effect". Agendas should be structured around key themes and staff support should be coordinated to facilitate more effective cross-community discussions. The online program should be posted well in advance and should be presented according to "issue tracks" in addition to days and constituencies' tracks. **For each issue, a clear description of the process time-line, to-date progress and expected results at a given meeting would also help the ICANN community evaluate progress and concrete outcomes.**

Remote participation

Further enhancing remote participation capabilities is the highest priority, both at the physical events and during intersessional work. Real-time transcription of ICANN's main sessions has been very positive and current efforts to post it in real-

time should be commended. Live audio feeds from other sessions, including SO meetings should be made available and all efforts undertaken to use communication tools to enable remote interaction at all stages. ICANN must become a model in remote participation.

Language policy

Additional steps to develop interpretation in main sessions are key to diversify international participation. Regional meetings are also an opportunity to engage linguistic communities. In parallel, a clearer document classification could help establish an improved translation policy on key papers (for instance: issue papers, final recommendations, decisions). These measures must be studied with due consideration to the corresponding costs involved and budget available.

Indication of the status of each issue at a given meeting

Each session at ICANN meetings should **more clearly indicate the status of the discussion regarding the issue at stake**: whether it is a preliminary stage (awareness-raising, issue-framing, agenda-setting), an intermediary stage in a drafting exercise (consultation, review of progress, further consensus-building) or a decision-making stage (final validation by an SO, AC or the Board). Such an indication on the event program would allow actors to organize their work more easily. In that context, documents to be examined at a given ICANN meeting should be available early enough to allow informed interactions.

Intersessional work

More structured intersessional work is necessary to advance work on pending issues and to prepare for trans-stakeholder group interaction during the face-to-face ICANN meetings. **Better online collaboration methods and tools (conference calls and mailing lists) are probably needed and staff support is critical in that respect.** Clearer processes at ICANN level would also facilitate the planning of intersessional work undertaken by constituencies.

Policy development workflow

Recent examples (in particular on the IDN ccTLD fast-track) have demonstrated the benefits of a working group approach that draws on different sources of expertise from the outset of a process and allows better intersessional work. **Working group methodology should be further elaborated** to foster a more effective, accountable and multi-stakeholder policy development workflow.

Examination of other international organisations

There would be merit in ICANN examining arrangements in other similar international organisations. This analysis would assist in identifying models and useful options to improve existing meeting arrangements. GAC would recommend preparation of an options paper to focus discussion in Mexico.