

Transcription of ALAC and Regional Leadership Working Session 21 June 2009 – Sydney – Part 2

Sébastien: ...leader of the RALOs. But they are still in some lunch.

One of the [inaudible] we get today is that the people who went outside wanted to go to the food court, and on Sunday, it's closed. So it was quite difficult to find a place to eat quickly -- even if it was not so quickly needed.

Nick: I can recommend a good dim sum restaurant, which is very fast. It's the building opposite on the first floor, on the corner. As soon as you sit down, they wheel around all this dim sum. It's very tasty, very cheap and very quick. If you've got 20 minutes, that's been my 20-minute haunt.

It's on the other side, there. You go up the escalators to the first floor, and it's in the corner. I can't remember what it's called.

Sébastien: When you say it's "in front," it's on George Street?

Nick: Yes.

Sébastien: Because the hotel is going from Pete to George Street.

Nick: It's on... I don't know which street this is.

Sébastien: It's George Street.

Nick: George Street.

Sébastien: And it's in the QVB, on the first floor.

Nick: Yes. It's very fast, very tasty and very cheap. So it comes with my recommendation.

Sébastien: The food there is [inaudible] you cannot make a huge mistake.

Nick: Okay. I suggest that we would start the meeting. Thank you again for joining us. A change about public participation. May I ask you to give us a few minutes' presentation of where you think we stand on that issue? Then we will try to keep that more open and informal, with q/a as much as possible.

I remind everybody that you need to speak into the mic, to say who you are. Once it's recording, people may be online and they need to know. The second point is that there is an interpretation into French and Span and English -- whichever sense you want. Now I can give the floor to Kieren. Thank you.

Kieren: Hello. For those of you who don't know me, I'm the general manager of Public Participation. That's a slightly odd, broad-ranging job, where I try to effectively improve all the

participation for whomever gets involved within ICANN. We try to encourage new people into ICANN.

In terms of where we are with public participation... That's an enormously broad subject. Actually, I always like coming to talk. Mostly I like the q/a.

The thing that sparked me to send a note to Nick was that there were 2 or 3 very, very late submissions to public comment periods. I've actually looked at ALAC and I've been looking at improving the public-comment process for a while. I've done little bits here and there. But I think now is the time to try to revamp it effectively.

So when these were coming in very late, I said to Nick, "Well, this is not the manner that ALAC's just sending in late because they can or because they don't care..."

It's because somewhere along the line, this process needs fixing. So people don't feel the need or are able to follow what's going on, and are able to get these comments in on time. Then we're able to make more of it -- and so on and so forth. That's what sparked me off to say to Nick, "I'd love to come and talk to the At-Large."

So the public comments are on my head, at the moment. Another thing in my head is document deadlines. The board approved a document deadline for meetings to be 10 days and 15 working days before a meeting. For Seoul, they're looking at making it 15 working days before a meeting.

That's great -- and everyone's been saying for years that we need to do this. The nightmare of getting on a plane and having 800 documents and then getting off the plane and finding there are another 22. Then expecting to come into a meeting room the day after and be able to talk coherently about it. That's been a complaint for ages.

So we finally have a document deadline in place, but now it's a matter of figuring out all the different changes we're going to have to make organizationally to make that work. If it's just imposed, it's going to fall apart straightaway. The idea is to figure out what the changes are, and to make it work -- so that our work product and our workflow is more logical. So we're not always so rushed with everything. That's also on my mind.

Public Forums is on my mind -- as ever, with regard to how to improve it. I still don't like the public forum very much at all. I don't think it does what it's supposed to do, very well. We still have the same sort of people -- the same core group of people -- that get up and give a series of statements.

It's just not very interactive or terribly useful. Considering the amount of time put aside every meeting for it, we need to get more out of it.

Translation, I suppose, is worth talking about. And this usability study, which I'd like to talk about, as well. We've just started a usability study for the website; I don't know what will come out of it. But the idea is that everyone has always complained about the ICANN website and how hard it is to find things. The fact that it looks dreadful -- which it does.

So, we started a usability study. If you have a look on the front page of the ICANN website... actually, any of the pages... there's a little thing at the top that says, "Click here to take an online survey."

So -- there you go... "Tell us how we're doing." All very friendly language.

If you click on that and answer a few questions, you go through to an online forum. We try to gather the views from the community about how they use the site, and what they want. How they're going to use that.

Actually, the external consultants are called, "Revere Group." We're going to use that. Hopefully, we'll end up with a much better website at the end of it. I'm not quite sure what the timeline for that will be. I think it's so important that we should[n't] really put a timeline on it. We should just make sure that we do a good job.

Those are the main things on my mind. I don't know whether you want me to talk about any particular one in great depth, or if you just want to ask me questions.

Sébastien: Yes. I will ask you a question, but maybe I would like you to tell us a few words about the board working group on Public Participation. And when it will meet.

Kieren: I'm the staff support for this board committee -- public participation. It can be quite annoying, frankly. Because every time I have a meeting, I end up with a huge amount of work. That's exactly what happened yesterday.

But they do have quite a pragmatic focus. They want to get stuff done, rather than coming up with high-fallutin concepts about how ICANN should be. So they were the people that got through this document deadline or put one in place.

They recognized that it was going to be great trouble, but that the best thing was to put it there -- and then figure out how to deal with it. Rather than what we tend to do much of at ICANN -- trying to create the perfect system and then put it in place. By the time you create a perfect system, it's out of date.

They're looking at a lot of these things. Actually, I should say they're having their public meeting on Wednesday at 9. It's worth going to. Actually, at that meeting, they'll go through the feedback they got from the last meeting in Mexico, and what they'd done with that feedback. And then what they're looking at to improve down the line.

It's a pretty friendly board committee. It's still slightly stuffy because the board committees do tend to be slightly stuffy. But they're focused on improving participation -- and that's the focus.

One of the issues is they'll be giving updates on document deadlines. Updates on language. Updates on the calendar of meetings for 2011, 12 and 13. Then issues for discussion will be the Public Comment Process, the Public Forum, and then Electronic Tools for Participation. Looking at other ways of doing it.

One thing that I really should promote... In the main room, we've got this Adobe Connect software running. It's very good. We tested it extensively in Mexico City. We have live

video, live audio and live scribe feed. Presentations and chatroom. It all goes on in one window at the same time. I think that's actually the closest we ever got to really decent remote participation.

We can archive it fairly quickly afterwards and upload it as a video. I think once you see that in action, that will be very effective. It's the most effective form of remote participation we've had so far.

So is that enough background, or would you like me to talk more?

Sébastien: Thank you.

Any questions to Kieren? Adam, please.

Adam: Has ICANN defined what it means by, "public participation?" And does it have a mission or goal of how it will achieve what it has defined as, "public participation?"

Kieren: We could've set that up, you and I. Yes. We do.

There's an organization called "The International Association for Public Participation." It's based somewhere in the US, although it's very international. They've got a very, very good... Actually, I spent the first two meetings, I think, with a rather boring, "What Is Public Participation," and so on and so forth.

We came up with five different approaches and summaries and analyses of it. Then I found or actually [Kotin Turay] found the IAP2, as they call themselves. They have a list of core values and something else.

They basically have a very, very good summary of what is public participation. I can actually direct you to it. If you go to Public.ICANN.Org... Who's in charge of the browser? Is it you, Heidi?

V: No. Nick.

Kieren: Ah -- Nick. So if you go to Public.ICANN.Org... Anyway...

You'll see in a second. They've just got this list of, "What is public participation? How do you do it?" That's what we're following. If you go to "Core Values..." Just click there and scroll down. There you go. There's "Public Participation -- Core Values." Under that is the Code of Ethics. That's the guiding document.

Sébastien: Push your button and I will give you the floor -- each one. Beau, and then [Hang ad Howah].

Beau: My question follows along the same lines, but it's perhaps meant to be a bit more proactive. If you had to go out onto the streets of Sydney right now and convince five people to publicly participate in ICANN, what would you tell them? It's one thing to have that -- which is marvelous -- and it's great to show boards of directors and such. But to actually convince a regular person -- who may not even know what a domain name is, or why it should be important to them... How would you convince them to be part of ICANN?

Kieren: I'm not sure I would try to convince them. In the same way if someone came up to me and told me that I had to go to this pharmaceutical conference around the corner. It would take some pretty hard convincing.

I think there are certainly many more people than come to ICANN conferences that should be coming to ICANN conferences. But I think grabbing the man off the street is the wrong way to do it.

We have to be much, much better at saying what ICANN does, and why it's interesting. I think we have to move slightly away from this concept of, "We'll grab someone and put them in a room like this and allow them to start discussing the various policies."

Beau: Could I just respond to that by saying I'm not suggesting you should? But if you had to, what would you tell them? What mechanisms exist currently within ICANN that would be appealing to somebody that wants to get involved in it -- who's to a lobbyist or lawyer or whatever?

Kieren: Well, I'd say there are a few, but I'll punt it back at you, in the sense that that's what you all are supposed to do. That's why you've got your RALOs. That's why you have At-Large. That's what you're supposed to be doing.

I'm only one bloke, and I act as far as I can what I think will improve it. And I act as far as I can when people say to me, "This is a problem. We want to do this..." Then I try to figure out all the ways to do it.

If I had a staff of 30, I would approach that problem. I have a staff of 1 -- which is me. So I tend to be more reactive, unfortunately. I'd like to be more proactive.

What I doing I suppose, that is proactive, is I try to create more documents in plain English. Trying to make the public comment process for what we do more accessible. So if someone does decide they want to find out about gTLDs and they've got a view, I product people.

I'm constantly prodding people. They must wonder why they suddenly like -- for example -- Twitter. So I read an article when they send some comment. Oh -- "ICANN..." They don't even know who ICANN is. "ICANN's trying to make a load of money from extending the Internet. What a bunch of idiots."

Then they're going to be very surprised to get a thing back from me saying, "Well, have you seen this?" With a link to a public comment periods. I think that provides very, very little payoff, but it cheers me up, frankly.

V: My question actually is along the same line. You can measure the effort you put in. But how do you measure the results of your effort?

For example, you can tell us that you talked to five people on the street to come to the ICANN meeting. But do you know how many of them come?

Kieren: Yes. Zero.

We've got stats for attendees. We've put in a registration thing for this remote participation. We're finding out that people are that have come. ICANN meetings are growing. More people are coming.

V: No, no. I'm sorry. I don't mean just the particular issue of people coming to the ICANN meetings. I meant in general -- for public participation. That involves many more than just those coming to meetings. How do you measure the results of the tremendous amount of effort you put in?

Kieren: I would like to say I measure it by comments on public comment periods. But that would be a very bad idea, because we just don't get enough.

You could measure it by the number of people that come to the website. I think that's a fairly good measure. That's been increasing.

One of the things that worry me -- which the usability experts are going to look at -- is... I've culled all the stats for who looks at ICANN's website. We have 87% of people that come to visit the site... and we've even stripped out spiders and all of that... only coming once a month and then go. That's it. They arrive and they go.

The bizarre thing is, as I tracked back over time, it's basically the same pattern every single time. 87% of the people that arrive... What's the figure? I think we get something like 250,000 people every month. They arrive once and they disappear. Then about 10%... No... I've got the figures wrong. About 6% come twice, and there's almost nothing.

Then there's the core community, which is 10-plus-times. You can see exactly who they are. That amounts to about 4,000 people coming 10 or more times a month.

The huge figure is that of the people coming once. A big chunk of that would be people who just type in, "ICANN," because they read it in an article or they click through to something. But there should be a lot more people coming 4 or 5 times a month. That's how I intend to measure it. That would be -- in my brain -- my measurement.

To reduce the number of people that only come once, and increase the number of people that come several times a month. If you can think of better metrics, I'd be happy to figure it out.

But it's not easy, frankly. You could do it by looking at e-mail lists, but then they would tend to have a community that would just sent out huge numbers of e-mails. That tends to come in waves.

So there'd be a main list that's dead for a month and then something would kick off and everyone would reply. So it's almost impossible to figure out how many people are actually interacting, or whether it's just a control issue of the moment.

It's a good question. My answer is, "I think website stats are the best that I've got."

Sébastien: Thank you. [Howah].

Howah: Merci, Sébastien.

Alo. Ma question...

V: Thank you.

The question I have is about the contact with the particular person on the street. During the At-Large Summit, we talked about this topic. We made a few recommendations. Are you aware of these recommendations?

Kieren: They were picked up in various places, I've noticed -- the recommendations. I suggest you keep plugging them, as well, because it works.

So yes, they've cropped up. I'm trying to think of the last time they cropped up. They cropped up in saying that I provided to the board participation committee... there was one aspect of... I don't remember exactly the words of the participation committee, but there were a whole series of recommendations in there.

I picked out the ones that we clearly weren't doing enough on. I said, "We should start looking at these." That's why they're now putting a bit of a focus on the public comment process. And they're putting a focus on electronic tools.

So, following that, that has caused a slight shift in priorities. Otherwise, we'd be talking about internal, "How do we get the same community to talk to each other better?" That has helped shift thinking to, "How do we look more externally?"

Sébastien: Alan?

Alan: I came in a little late, so I didn't hear the whole presentation on how you define public participation. But I'd like a somewhat detailed explanation of how you define, "public."

I mean that in the sense that when a call for public consultation goes out on a subject and the main participants are IBMs, business associations, corporate entities... and almost no participation from consumers of the Internet -- from registrations and that kind of thing... Do you consider that to successfully quote the public?

In order to know how to answer that question, I need to know how you define what you consider "ICANN's Public."

Kieren: I would define it as people who are interested in ICANN's work. This is a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation. So I know that my brother will never be interested in ICANN -- even though he has his own domains and he uses the Internet every day. He won't be interested.

And yet, my brother could easily be interested in what ICANN does. It's very, very difficult. I think what the public is... I think you put the stuff out there. You make it accessible. Then you see who comes, frankly.

An analogy that's probably going to fall apart, but... We need to create a funnel, effectively. That is, you have a very large group at the top and you're trying to get all those people down.

They'll funnel down to the people near the bottom that are the people that do the day-to-day work. That's what ICANN ultimately does.

ICANN ultimately writes policies and decides how to expand the domain-name space, and so on and so forth. It defines how the registrars work and all that. But the vast majority of people that even come into ICANN are not going to want to have to go through those fine details. Not that that's not valuable, because I think there's a huge number of people that keep everyone else honest.

I don't know how you'd define the "public." People that are interested in following ICANN's work.

From my perspective, all we can do is make sure that we make it as interesting as possible and as open as possible.

Alan: Isn't that a problem? What I mean is -- in terms of the fundamental ability for you to execute what you're trying to do... if you're not even totally sure of the definition of, "The public," then doesn't that make the whole issue of, "How do you get that 'public' to participate?" totally nebulous?

Kieren: No. It's just semantics. It's just saying, "Well, if you don't know what the word means, then you don't know what to do." Yes. I know what to do. I need to make the website work better. I need to make the documents more readable. I need to make them available in different languages.

I don't need to have a semantic, philosophical discussion.

Alan: No. I don't mean the semantics. You were very, very clear, before. Where you defined the "public," as "the people that are interested in ICANN." To me, that's very different from the "people who are affected by ICANN." It's a very significant difference. And it has a very, very major role or bearing on how ICANN sees the "public."

I think it's significant and I think it's very troubling.

Kieren: Well, again, it's not my job. I'm afraid that's all of your jobs to pull in those people. The RALOs are there to find people that are interested in Internet policy. To help them combine into groups and have discussions with them. It's for you to then turn up at ICANN meetings and say, "As a representative for 100,000 people, I'm telling you that this is what people think."

It really isn't my job. I'm not a god. I can't go reach out and grab the users of the world and say, "Come with me." That's just not feasible.

Alan: So who in ICANN is involved with having meetings in Washington, where it goes out and solicits certain groups for their input? Those that go out and do that kind of thing actively. Why aren't those groups just assumed to be able to come in the way ALAC is coming in?

Sébastien: Wait... I love this discussion. But I think we have to take care of one thing.

It is not ALAC. It is not ICANN. "We" are ICANN. If we want something done, we have to struggle for it.

What the staff of ICANN is doing, we can agree or disagree. I very often disagree with what they do. But it's the result of the ICANN world -- which means all the participants today.

If we want to do better, that's one of the reasons ALAC is here. We certainly can do... How many new analysts have we since the summit? Two. Do you think we're doing our job?

We committed after the summit to have one analyst per country. Where are we on that?

We can always say that the others are bad, and they are not. Sometimes they are. But we need also to see what we do to obtain what we want to achieve. That's also an important point.

Frankly, since Kieren came onboard this ICANN world, I see so many changes he managed to help the organization to take. It's not fair, too, because he's in the room today, that we punch on him.

The question you ask may be asked to the CEO. That would be the right person to ask. He's the one in charge of the staff working in this or that or the other direction. He's the boss of all the staff. If you just had one person for public participation and 10 or 20 for compliance... It's a choice. It's a management choice.

We can question that, but... Frankly, on the job done by Kieren, I think we need to find a way to help him, because he will help us.

Alan: Okay. Then let me just be very specific about something. It has to do with the timelines that are given for public comment. They've frequently been a problem.

With the amount of gap that goes between when something is put out for public comment and the time that it takes to do the translation and the top-down that ALAC has to do to get this information down to the ALSs -- get feedback -- bring it back up through the regions... and then to come back to you and, "Oh, my -- the deadline's gone."

I'd like to find out how we can improve that. In order to get the At-Large component higher in what you're trying to do in getting public consultation, I really think that needs to be accommodated better.

Kieren: This is good. This is specifics, and I agree, entirely. We need to figure that out and put it down on paper. How long does it take? Why does it take that long? Is it always going to take that long? Can it be done faster?

Are you being as efficient as you need to be? Do I need to argue to increase the length of public comment periods? Do we need to have fewer public comment periods, so everyone can focus on one at a time, so it works faster?

Those are the sorts of discussions we need to have.

The other issue... I read this paper. The other issue -- and I think the problem with this paper -- is it doesn't account for the fact that public comment periods are for everyone in ICANN. Not just At-Large.

So the ideal scenario for you is going to be the worst scenario for someone else. You have to find the compromise. What's the best way of doing it?

It clearly does not work that well, at the moment. There are too many comment periods, and there are too few comments. It's not that there's a lack of energy or passion or thought about any of them -- although maybe the terms of reference to the [SSAC] review or whatever maybe...

I'm sure some people get excited about that. But I can't imagine that At-Large will be particularly overly excited about it.

There are some bits that we need to work better at it. We need to be clearer of what exactly it is that this public comment period is for. Make clearer how the input works. Be clearer of what impact that input has. These are all things that have to be worked on.

I've been saying this 'til I'm blue in the face, internally. But things only happen when the community starts turning around and saying, "This has to change because of this and this and this and this." Then people start listening.

So I know that the sheer glut of public comment periods recently has caused a lot of people to reflect on whether we're going down the right lines.

Sébastien: Was the question good, Alan?

V: I think I'm commenting mainly in regard to what Evan was saying. I've maintained for a long time that ICANN and parts within ICANN -- including At-Large -- use the term, "The Users," in -- I think -- a poorly defined and, I think -- ill-defined way.

We are going to be making decisions that will affect many, many people. Both many registrants and many users of the domains, which are created through that process. Most of whom -- even though they're going to be affected -- are not in a position to interact with us.

I can go to a meeting and ask, "So you're in ICANN. What do you do?" I can start speaking within three minutes. Their eyes glaze over and they don't really want to hear it.

Or if they do have a substantive question, it's going to be on the issues of, "What should happen when the JPA expires?" And, "Just who is it that ICANN is going to report to?"

I was in a meeting in Geneva for a few weeks last month, and those were the questions that get asked. Not the subtleties of domain names.

I think we have to identify whom it is that we want to speak to and make sure that we're targeting documentation and information for them, and be in a position to receive input from them. But it's going to be a small subset.

Hopefully a larger subset than the people who comment on our various comment periods, now. But it's a small and a very different subset than the world of users -- or even registrants.

Alan: So how do we ensure that their interests are being met?

We -- ICANN -- how do we do that collectively?

Evan: A combination of chipping away at the block. When we see major misdirection, yelling and screaming.

We've identified a few times recently that it's very frustrating to have ICANN go around the world with dog-and-pony shows for registrars and not put any resources into trying to attract the spokespeople for users that are in those same places. Be they the ALSs or various people who have insight and interest in it.

I think that's something that we have to keep on doing, because I don't think that ICANN has done a very good job of that. I don't think that's Kieren's job, but it is -- I believe -- ICANN's job. All we can do is keep hitting at those.

I think we need to make targeted statements like that, and even more specific. Not just the general ones of, "How do we get users involved?" I think that's too airy-fairy and it's a waste of our time.

Nick: Kieren seems to be talking about the public participation from a practical point of view. Evan, you're talking about it almost from, "Who should it be?" The "affected," which is a much broader approach to what the definition of, "The public," is. ICANN itself is actually a public-interest organization. That changes the notion of the word, "public," entirely, from one we've been discussing.

I don't know how Kieren really addresses that, but the committee on public participation -- and certainly the board -- should be thinking about these three definitions of "public." I think yours seems to be concerned with the practical participation of the public. Immediately, anyway.

Kieren: Yes. So I look forward to the day in which I'm told my services are no longer needed, because all of the practical issues have been solved -- and now we need to actually get the people in.

I got this job because I complained all the time about the very easily fixed issues with the process, and the way that ICANN interacted with people. That's what I'm here to fix. I'm here to fix the problems.

The broad of you... I know that [Portumy] has been working on some presentation about broader participation. That basically is comprised of -- if I can remember correctly -- different groups of people.

You have users, governments, et cetera, et cetera. It's pieced together of four groups. People that have never heard of ICANN, people that have heard of ICANN but don't participate, people that participate but not that much, and people that are involved all the time.

There are various different ways. The idea being that you would try to provide people with routes into participating all the time. That's a broader view of how to do it.

If I had a decent-sized budget and a staff, I'd probably allow myself to start thinking about that. But my focus has been and continues to be improving or -- in some places, creating -- better structures for what's there. So what's already there is more valuable and more functional.

I know that At-Large is consistently frustrated that it puts a lot of effort in and then comes up with a view, and it doesn't appear to have any impact. Well, that's clearly not a good system. You should have an impact. Especially if you're representing huge numbers of people.

So, find out why it's not having an impact and find out which gear is missing or rusty. Replace it and get rolling. That's how I see my job.

Sébastien: Patrick?

Patrick: Yes. Regarding comments.

One thing that I think is a bit of an issue every now and then is that some documents produced by ICANN, working groups, et cetera are put out for comments to the community -- and to whomever wants to comment. But it's purely a voluntary exercise.

Sometimes I think that there should be some proactive activity from ICANN, to reach out to groups and institutions that have a legitimate right to comment on a document.

I'll make a short example...

The IRT working group report touches several domains -- like IP or data protection, in the case of "Whols." Is there any process by which ICANN could -- for example -- ask [WIPO] for a comment on the report? Or should the [WIPO] just notice that ICANN expects some comment, and that they voluntarily submit a comment?

Same thing for data protection. Maybe it might be interesting to talk to data-protection offices throughout the world. To ask them, "Do you think this is a good idea? Do you think this is something that's workable?" Maybe we could save a lot of energy by doing this research from the beginning. Rather than coming up with a report, and trying to implement it within the ICANN community with registrants and registrars... And come to the conclusion that it actually will never work, because some of the aspects we did not think about might be prevented by some local or regional law somewhere.

So I think that just asking for volunteer comments is not always enough.

Kieren: I agree with you. I think one bit of reform I'd like to see in the public comment process is to have some kind of procedures that staff follow. One of them would be something that people do all the time. You need to identify people that are going to be interested in this. You need to go and contact them, and proactively say, "I want you to comment on this."

That's not done. That's not because of some grand conspiracy. It's not done because it's not been part of the system. There's never been a shortage of people to provide ICANN with their views.

When you get a lot of people constantly calling you, you tend to view that a lot of people are picking up most of the views. With this whole IRT trademark-protection aspect, it was a very good case. It went through three years of policy [within only two years]. A very long time.

There are lots of IP lawyers within ICANN's little world. So ICANN pretty much assumed that this had been covered. There were enough IP lawyers constantly getting up and saying, "No -- like this -- like this..." Then only when you hit a broader base and you start putting this out and it starts getting worldwide press... "ICANN is about to expand the domain-name system with new extensions..." Then there are all sorts of people that haven't heard about it before that pop up and say, "Damn. This is not good. What are you talking about?"

I'm not sure... To a certain extent, you can. If you have a more structured approach to public comments. If you say, "Who are the people that you are reaching out to?" Then I think you can avoid some of that. It certainly would be a better system than what we have now.

But I've got a suggestion or a challenge. You're probably or hopefully aware that there's going to be something that I sarcastically call the gTLD roadshow. It'll go around Abu Dhabi and London and New York. It's all on the front page of the website.

I know that currently I was having an argument with Carla [Valenti] about this. Most of the people being targeted for that don't just tour around the people and hope people turn up. They're businesses and governments and IP lawyers.

The question I put to him was, "Well, where are the people that are being affected? Where are the people that have gone by the new blog or whatever?"

She didn't really have an answer, because she wasn't really sure how to get hold of them. Who are the people?

You go to Abu Dhabi and is there a consumer group there? I don't know. But what At-Large could do is find out. Then say, "By the way, you should talk to this group. This is a good group to have at that meeting." That would be very useful. I think that would be the community helping itself.

ICANN's staff isn't made up of all-seeing beings. It's simply where you do a job and there's an enormous amount of work. You do what you can, and then before you know it, you have to be in Abu Dhabi presenting about new gTLDs.

If we had a staff of 1,000 people, maybe you could expect a bit more. But when you've got a staff of 100 and it's basically Carla and her assistant, and they're occasionally asking me about remote participation, you can't expect the perfect system. It comes down to a certain amount of resources. And only a certain number of brains.

So you can help out and say, "I see you're going to Abu Dhabi. You should talk to these people. They'd be interested in this. Here are their contact details." Or even push it a bit

further. Stick it on an e-mail and say, "I'm connecting you two up." I think that would help with the process.

V: I agree with your [inaudible]

Sébastien: But the circus gTLD show... I have a very simple question...

We want to increase the possibility for users to have domain names. We want to have more competition. [You think that no summit can continue to need to have a circus there]? They don't have already enough?

Why is the money spent to have a meeting in New York?

The second point is, "What is the [sweet] choice? It's all about image." Sorry. What is the sweet choice? It's mostly English-speaking countries. Even if we can't talk about Abu Dhabi. It's not.

But in that part of the world, it's one where they talk a lot of English. It's all about image. I know. But it's something that stresses me a lot.

Why nothing in Africa, if we have to make a world circus? At the end of the day, why would somebody show up to that? We don't care. Any way, it will happen in a wrong or good way. We would have to struggle with that.

As the end user, why would we need to say something today? Because we would not listen on that subject, at all.

We are in front of us with a mess -- the new gTLD process. [inaudible]. But it's not the time to discuss that issue, now. Just to give you those for examples.

I will give you the floor, but Evan wanted to ask a question. Then maybe Adam. And I would like to give...

Okay.

Adam: I just briefly wanted to say there will be a meeting in Africa, actually. They just haven't yet figured out where to hold it. So there will be a Latin American meeting and an African meeting, also.

Sébastien: Yes. Okay. We can discuss that. Why we have already ICANN meetings, and we don't... Frankly, ICANN is a lot of money and it's spent for something I don't understand why. Okay.

We are obliged -- our people -- voluntary people -- to arrive the day of the meeting. That's where the staff wants to spend the money. I guess it's the wrong way, but that's my personal point of view.

Evan and then Adam.

Evan: Kieren -- what you were saying before -- about the roadshow and the difficulty it takes to find out who's on the ground. You're absolutely right.

But there are three really good people in that corner, and a phone call to any of them would probably alert them to say, "Where can I find people on the ground?" That would have pointed people to the right RALO. That might have pointed people to the closest ALSs.

My thought is that it would not have taken that much time internally, had somebody cared about bringing At-Large into the meeting. One phone call or two would've at least put the right pointers and the right processes in place to get that happening.

Also, when it comes time to... "Where do we take the roadshow?" Can that at all be affected as well by where the general public is concentrated and needs to know? As opposed to just when you say, "We want to reach the IP lawyers..." Well.. That helps dictate where you have the roadshow.

If the goal is to reach the greatest number of people -- the greatest number of end-users -- the greatest number of people affected... Wouldn't that also affect the choice of venues for this roadshow?

Kieren: I don't accept the premise of what you're saying -- which is that somehow ALAC was ignored or purposely ignored. Or something like that. That's simply not true.

I've got a very simple question for you -- "Where would you have them?"

Evan: I'm just one person.

Kieren: Exactly. Someone has to make a decision. There is no greater power that you can say, "And where shouldst thou have these meetings?"

So, you say, "All right. We'll have one in each region." Then you say, "All right. So where have we been to? Where do you know people where they are?" There are people making calls at the end of this.

It's very easy after a decision is made to point out why a decision is wrong.

Evan: Actually, if you really want to ask me for venues of where you'd like me to suggest, there are answers. There are answers in each region. Give a little bit of time and ask the question within each region. Put it out to the RALOs and you will get answers back. You'll get informed answers back.

The question has never been asked.

Sébastien: Adam and then...

Adam: This isn't really a criticism of you, Kieren. But I think it is a criticism of ICANN. I'm really quite tired of the idea that this comment that I see... I meant to come to you and say, "I have found out by chance that you're holding a meeting somewhere, and my advice is..." As a volunteer that's supposed to be helping you do things, I want you to come to me and say,

"We're holding a meeting." It should be you coming to us. Not us randomly finding out that meetings are happening -- which is how it goes at the moment.

I think that probably touches to Devon's point, right. We're actually here as a resource. We're not here as this sort of random thing that finds things out via the website. And, "If you want our advice, then you're going to have to seek it more proactively."

I don't see why we have to find out there's going to be a roadshow from you, rather than when the roadshow is being planned, being included in that planning process. There've been European meetings that we've only found out about because people are actually traveling to them, and they've told us that they're going on -- for registrars and registrants.

As the European RALO, I don't think that's acceptable. You're just wasting money on us, if that's the attitude that ICANN has. Not you particularly as an individual.

I think there's got to be a change in mindset. If you're going to hold roadshows and you want advice on things, come tell us about them when you're planning them.

Kieren: Absolutely. So this is the question... "How do we do that?"

You happen to know that an announcement was put out. That's the easiest way to do it. That announcement is put on the ICANN website. Then it's originally set through to the At-Large list. Or should we send it through the At-Large list?

What...?

Adam: We're talking about pre-planning. These things are not... We actually want to have Carla or whomever is doing or thinking about this, to inform the three staff -- who really are quite good about communicating with us. To say, "Something is being planned. We would like advice on it, if you can provide advice."

Best we can, we'll provide advice. But we can't do it late in the day as a reactive afterthought, basically. Either we're a part of this organization or we're not. I think you or ICANN should start including us more proactively, and use the staff -- who are perfectly good and able at communicating with us, and do it at all times.

Kieren: I agree with you in the sense that -- yes -- you're right. But the implication that At-Large missed out in consultation is not the case. It was simply these...

Adam: It's about the process. Improve it. You're holding roadshows. You want to know where consumers are going to be. Talk to us at the start of the process and we might be able to help you. This late in the day, we probably can't.

The reason these meetings are being held somewhere is probably because somebody is talking to IP lawyers. Somebody is talking to governments. But you're not talking to us.

If you want consumers and you want user interests, start talking to us. Again, I don't mean you particularly, when I say that word, "You."

Kieren: I think you're right.

I can tell you that the difficulty with that would be... And I didn't plan this... But I think they were organized too late, and I think they are coming too soon.

The reality of that is because of this effort to move on with gTLDs. So these meetings are not a be-all-end-all. It's not like whatever happens at these meetings is what happens with gTLDs. It's an effort to spread out what's going on to a wider group of people. It's not like this meeting is the final finish point.

As I understand it -- if I were having to run these sessions... You need to take what you've got -- which would be whatever comes out of this meeting...

You need to go and [shout around] a lot of people in order that they can then get back in an order that you can end up with a final, agreed-upon [African guidebook]. In order that you can open up applications after you've done a 3-month awareness program. And so on and so forth.

I think you're right. The problem with it is that it would extend everything if that approach is taken. It would make everything very much slower. I think that's the pressure.

Sébastien: Nick wanted to say something. Then [inaudible] and Alan.

Nick: Well, I've typed most of it into the chat. Just to tell you all that -- ironically, for this conversation -- Carla distributed the information about the events that are about to be posted. There's a posting for the 12th on 2 of the 3 regional events, with the notice that more would be coming soon.

She actually contacted the policy department and said, "Look. As soon as I have a posting date for this -- based on where the events will be held -- would you please distribute this information about the events? This time around, we'd actually like to ensure that everyone gets notified about the events. Not by hearing about it "if" they happen to stumble across it on the website, but because they've been proactively notified.

This is obviously entirely separate from the question of being asked for input into where the events will be held. But this time around -- for what it's worth -- she really has tried to make an effort.

The unfortunate truth is that things are trickling out about where things will be held, before they are being posted. That was not the idea. The idea was that the notice would come out at the same time as the postings were made.

Operator: There are only two people in this conference. This call will be disconnected unless you press 88 now.

Adam: Another thing that may be worth raising is... as a way to alleviate this pressure is the use of more remote-participation tools. For example -- the Adobe Connect that we're going to try out in the main room at this meeting. That may end up being a very useful way of doing it. I still think it's slightly bizarre that we travel around the world so much when we're all about the Internet and the Internet has very good tools for that. We need to work on those tools.

In fact, I've been told that I have to produce a whole report on remote participation tools. Electronic tools that will enable that to work better.

I understand what the frustrations are. But I think it's not through some kind of intent. It's, "What are the solutions?" If we can find the solutions, then we'll put them into place.

Sébastien: Kathy?

Kathy: Hi. I wanted to introduce myself. I'm Kathy [Clemmon]. I'm cofounder of the Non-Commercial Users' Constituency. Many people have urged me to come to this meeting. If anyone thinks it's inappropriate that I be here, please let me know.

You're having an important discussion, and I've got lots and lots of answers. I would have held...

Sébastien: Please -- it's being translated. Take your time. Slow down.

Kathy: Okay.

Sébastien: We are an international gathering, here. People even that are not listening to the translation do not speak as a first language, English. Take your time. You have time to talk to us. And you are welcome. Everybody is welcome in this arena. No problem.

Kathy: Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

San Francisco rather than New York to hold a meeting. North America -- San Francisco. There are Internet-savvy individual organizations and Internet-savvy companies. I think you would've heard a lot of different types of responses in San Francisco than in New York -- where the IP attorneys are strong.

Every time ICANN rushes a proceeding, the group they lose is that of registrants. Everyone else has attorneys that are paid on staff. Registrars, registries and IP. This IRT report is a debacle.

The idea that you hold -- that ICANN allowed a 30-day public comment period, and then only the first 10 days of public comments counted -- was frustrating for individuals. To say the least. And non-commercial organizations. It is a travesty of public comment.

Someone mentioned the data-protection commissioners. I think it was Patrick. Data-protection commissioners have participated in the "Whols" proceedings, and yet they were not contacted about the Whols proposals and the IRT report.

We can't expect that they're going to monitor us, but they have participated. They could easily be summoned back again, and requested to participate again.

We have their names. They've been part of the process for years. But even a 30-day public notice period isn't enough for them. They need time to process these things.

So I think the big thing -- at least from a participation of this individual -- is enough time. Set up a minimum amount of time and stick to it, so that people know the timeframes.

Kieren: These are the useful details you need to delve into.

For example -- there are very few procedural rules for public comments. In fact, there are very few. It would be useful to have some.

Kathy: It would be very useful. There are models in every government on how to do it.

Kieren: Sure. So we're now going to be starting the process by which... What procedures do we have? That would be very useful input to have. The difficulty I could foresee -- particularly with ICANN -- where it has almost a compulsive desire to put everything out for public comment is...

If we put a 45-day comment period on everything, we have a 45-day comment period on the terms of reference for an [SSAC] review. That's just extending everything for no apparently good reason. So I think that you need a series of procedures that identify the importance of something. I think there are rules that you could write in that would help define that.

For example... I'm not going to talk about IRT, because that's a policy thing, and I have strong views on that. I'd only get myself into trouble.

But if part of that was that the procedures was you'd have to go and identify relevant people, and then you would go speak to those relevant people and ask for their views on this... And then you found those relevant people. It's not hard to find -- particularly with a trademark issue...

If they say, "All right. We need 45 days for this," or, "We need 60 days for this." Then you'd say, "Right. That's 60 days." Rather than ICANN's staff making the decision and then being hit over the head when it turns out they get it wrong.

If you make a lot of decisions, most of them are right and one of them is wrong. The one that's wrong comes back to haunt you.

I think having a procedure which ties that in would probably solve a lot of the problems.

Sébastien: Okay. We need to start to shift a little bit the objectives now. It's 3.00. We have to start on how At-Large could be involved in the public participation and comment period and so on.

Just before, I will give the floor to Nick to tell us where we are on that subject. Kieren -- obviously with good reason -- didn't say what he thought about. I don't know what his thinking is about with IRT. But I just want to tell him my personal view on that.

It's the reverse of public participation. It's the reverse of notice [inaudible]. It's the reverse of what a board of ICANN must decide on any overarching issue in that period.

The worst thing is this work decision taken by the board from a long time ago. It's created a lot of trouble, without solving any of the issues. It's like a single government trying to govern ICANN. It's the same thing as asking one constituency to govern a new project like you've

detailed. But that's my personal view. It's not the At-Large, ALAC or anyone else's view today. I just wanted to tell you.

Nick -- please -- can you introduce the next part of the meeting?

Yes. You can stay, obviously. I don't know... Is your schedule, Kieren... You were supposed to be with us up to 3.00. It's up to you.

Kieren: Yes. Maybe you'd want to...

Sébastien: If I open that, there is Evan who wanted to speak. Carlos? Okay -- but short. I give you very short. Evan and then Carlos.

Evan: I guess my whole issue -- and I guess I've been talking at a higher level... I guess if it comes across that I'm attacking it at a detail or personal level, I apologize for that.

I think part of my frustration is the matter of what seems to be an attitudinal one. When people come up with an idea of, "Yes. We want to do something," they should be thinking from the very beginning about how to engage At-Large, as opposed to making it tacked on, after some period of time -- to making it part of the original thought process.

"We're doing a roadshow. How do we engage At-Large?" And to bring that in right at the very beginning. That's not a matter of detail. It's not a matter of assumptions. To me, it's a matter of attitude.

If there's somebody else we need to bring in to talk about that -- to talk about it at a higher level -- of how you change that attitude... I don't know. I'm thinking out loud. But I think that's part of what I'm hoping to get out of this.

Sébastien: [Kieren]?

Carlos: I don't remember when it was that I said this, but... I think it was in Puerto Rico. I don't know why you or your office has statistics with results that the function you developed has improved. Do you have statistics in this regard?

Specifically, according to what we can see... It hasn't improved much.

[In Puerto Rico], you said that you do many things, Kieren. That you did this and that. That you increased the budget. But I was telling you that if you are doing so many things and the results don't show, that means that some things that are being done are not being done properly.

That's why I'm asking about statistics and results in our region, specifically. In Latin America and the Caribbean, participation is still little. It's small. Because the documents don't arrive in the proper language of the region. The few documents that arrive are not all of them. They don't have the background or the follow-up.

If we don't have the complete information, participation dilutes. In Africa, I think it's precisely the same. These remote-participation methods -- up 'til now -- have worked very poorly. They are starting to work, slightly.

So my question for Kieren is, "What results do you have? What are the statistics, and what are the perspectives regarding this?"

Sébastien: Kieren? Some final words, if I can ask you that now? And then I will give the floor to Nick. Sorry, Nick.

Kieren: So, yes -- the results are not as good as I want them to be. I find it frustrating.

We do translate a lot of stuff. We're translating more. That was a struggle. The quality was bad and now it's good. That was solved. Effectively solved. And we've got a translation manager. So it's better.

We translate more announcements, so it's better. But there's still this gap. There is a gap. I see the biggest gap is the fact that we still have an all-English front-page website -- which we're working on.

So when you arrive, you see an all-English website. How on earth are you going to find an Arabic or a Spanish document within an all-English website?

It's a problem that's being worked on. It's going slower than I want. It's not having as many results as I want.

One example -- which is mildly successful -- was the question-box that I put out at the same time in five languages. Spanish was after English as the most popular response. About seven questions for that. There were like 20 in English. 2 Arabic, 1 Russian, 1 Chinese. It was still small, but I was pleased that there were at least 7 Spanish comments.

I think it's going to be a bit of an avalanche. There's going to be a point at which it suddenly becomes very much easier for non-English speaking communities to get the whole picture. I think at that point, we'll find a lot more people getting involved.

But you're right. It's piece-meal at the moment. You add to that the fact that ICANN documents do tend to be difficult and unwieldy, anyway. Then if you can only find a third of them in your language, you haven't got a chance. People have got much better things to do while they walk around the park or have a cup of coffee.

So yes, I've not been as successful as I'd like to be. But there is very clear improvement. And there are systems that I don't think can be pulled out -- which is probably more important. Particularly with different language groups.

In terms of the wider participation, we're getting there. The language is better. The systems are slightly better.

I think one of the ironies of... One thing I did work quite hard on was improving the public comment process, so there was a page on which it was located. So now all staff could be summary analyses of the comments -- which, incredibly, they didn't for all the time that I was there, until I started this... what I produced.

The downside of that has been that now we put out everything that's public comments, and you get swamped by it. So it's a double-edged sword.

Yes, I agree. I remember in Puerto Rico, what I was actually asking was that I wanted At-Large to go and tell management to give me a budget. Rather than I "had" a budget. I finally got a budget for the first time this year, which I intend to spend on this usability study and on more videos with translations and transcripts, et cetera.

I was hoping to show some very nice technology at this meeting. We'll have that at the next meeting.

For the first time, I've got it. And I'll tell you what -- I still don't know exactly how much it is. I think it's around \$250,000. That's a lot of money, but it's a drop in the bucket of what it should be -- to my mind. If you want to go and tell ICANN management that they should put more money into that, I would think it's a good idea.

So yes, I agree with you, basically. But I'm trying.

With regards to [WIDA] just trying to sum up...

I try to put lots of things out there, which you can all get involved in. Occasionally, if there's something that takes off, I say, "Look -- 100 people went and did this." Then people pay attention.

For example, we've got this usability study on the front page. It's a very simple survey. It'll take you five minutes. That's a direct and simple thing. Unfortunately, it's only in English. I'll tell you that, now.

I'll give you another fact that infuriates me. Even on Twitter, 67% of the people reading the Tweaks -- in any language -- come from the United States. Not even English speakers, but the United States. I haven't been able to shift that percentage. I shifted that percentage by about 4% in two years, and I just cannot break this massive dominance of the United States, in terms of people interacting and participating. That has an impact right across the organization.

75% of the people always are responding and always active are from the United States. There's a United States bias, and that's just a reality. I haven't quite figured out how to change that, but I am working on it. It is coming down slowly.

I had something else on my mind that I thought was important. Ah, yes -- come to the board public participation committee on Wednesday at 9.00. They're the people that make the decisions. And they've got [their research]. And they'll ask people what they think.

If you'll turn up, then you'll talk as one voice and it'll happen. It won't happen straightaway, but it'll happen. It will certainly happen more than if you don't turn up and don't say what you think. So I'd urge you to come to that meeting, and press them. I'm just one person and one staffer. They are a board committee of about 6 board members.

If they say, "All right -- we need to do this," it happens. It's Wednesday at 9.00. Level 4... I can't remember... It's the board committee for public participation. So, come and tell them.

Sébastien: I have two. Alan asked for the floor. [inaudible] for the floor, now. I would like very much if we could go to the next item. How ALAC will participate with the public comments period.

Then Alan, shortly... and [Olivier] shortly. Then hopefully Nick will be able to make his presentation.

Alan: I only have a very short comment. It's very uncharacteristic. I'm rarely accused of defending ICANN. I think we have to take things into perspective.

Part of the discussion you heard earlier on, "Why don't you tell us what meetings," was in reference -- I believe -- to the meeting in Rome, if I remember correctly. It may be for registrars and registries.

I heard about it by reading a blog entry about what was said. I went to the ICANN website, and nowhere on the ICANN website was it even mentioned. Never mind a prior invitation. So we're talking from a history of that to where we are, today. I think things are somewhat better.

In response to Carlos' comment... Yes. We need better document translation. Yes. We need better documentation. Yes. We need things in languages that people can actually understand, and not in technical language, only. Let's face it -- even in English, we're doing much better. We don't get a lot of comments. Certainly not from outside the US.

So there are some substantive problems that need to be addressed. Not just the translation one. So let's not pretend that if we translated everything instantaneously, we'd solve the problems. We wouldn't.

V: Yes. Just a quick question. Why is the front page still only available in English?

Kieren: Because, believe it or not, the entire website is still in static HTML. It's moving to database. We're moving to open-source software Drupal -- which will be used for the At-Large site. It is an unbelievable pain to do it. Even in English.

If we decided to do everything in all the languages, nothing would go up. It would take a day to put up on announcement, because it was a very badly put-together, old website.

Actually, I'd be interested in your views -- non-English speakers in this room... I was arguing with [Mark Sabotier] and Christine. So, Mark is the web admin guy. Christina is the translations manager. I was saying we should just put up a front page -- pick up where the browser comes from... Is it a French browser? Are they using French or Chinese or whatever? Just put up the announcements that we've gotten translated in those languages. Just have a horrible-looking front page -- but at least it would just be in that language.

Neither of them liked the idea, because it would just look very unprofessional. There's no getting around that. Christina -- besides... You should talk to Christina. She's got a whole localization plan mapped out, and it will get there. It is on the path. The move into Drupal is on the path.

So it will get there. I was arguing for a temporary very ugly front page -- just to demonstrate the fact that the material is out there. They're both currently unpersuaded. But if you think that would just... I know it would look awful, but that would be very helpful... then I will tell them that.

At the moment, they'd just rather go along the path they're going. In a few month's time -- maybe before Seoul, but probably after Seoul -- we should have more of multilingual front page.

Sébastien: Thank you. You can offer your help to have a multilingual system.

V: I'm just asking that, because I think some of the resources are being wasted. When one has -- for example -- the draft implementation plan for improving institutional confidence... That is translated into 3, 4 or 5 languages. You need to wade through pages and pages of English in order to reach that draft.

Then you look at the comments and there are no comments in any of these respective languages. So I'm just wondering... if you do have documents further down that are in local languages, how do you think that you'll be able to reach them?

Kieren: The answer is, "You can't." The other answer is, if you do it all manually by hand, it requires a brain to think, "Hang on. Piece it all together and do it." It takes an enormous length of time.

It's not a good system. I'm not going to support it. You won't find anyone in web- or in world-support. The answer we have is, "We are actively fixing it."

V: Do you have a timeline for this?

Kieren: We always have timelines for everything. They always get pushed off to one angle or another angle.

Like I said, I think by the end of the year. Drupal depends -- currently -- if you want to know the full [answer to this]... is this getting boring? It's probably getting quite boring -- isn't it?

But I'll tell you very quickly... In order to pull ICANN.org into this Drupal system, which has been affecting the [database] -- it doesn't matter what it's called -- into a database, we need to pull in the other [SOAC] websites. You can't just stick in "ICANN.org," and let the others come along later. It just won't work properly.

So we need to pull in the gNSO, which is the big beast that they're currently having discussions about. And the ccNSO. [SSAC -- RSAC] -- easy. We can do that in a second. And non-com is easy. We can do that in a second. [ASO] is relatively easy. That would take a matter of weeks.

The gNSO is the big beast. The ccNSO is another big beast. Once they are in, then it's relatively easy to get ICANN.org into Drupal. It just takes time and hiring people to pull it all in, and make sure they don't muck it up.

Of course, there are politics surrounding all of that. That's what slows the whole thing down. If it were a matter that everything could stop and we could sit down and work on it non-stop and hire people to do it, we could have it done in two months' time.

Sébastien: Thank you very much, Kieren, for your time with us today, and the discussion -- "frank and open," as people may say in the diplomatic world.

Nick -- can I give you the floor now?

Nick: Please. I'll be relatively brief.

I will just note at the beginning that with respect to converting the gNSO site, we're engaging... I won't tell you who it is, but it's someone you all know... to help convert the last of the At-Large material from the static wiki pages to the At-Large site. There are great real regional sites in Drupal, at last.

Then that person will move on to helping convert the gNSO website into Drupal, in order to move things along. Because it's not workable to have the people that are responsible for running the day-to-day website also go through the complex process of converting thousands of additional pages, while they're trying to do their day-to-day jobs.

So there is actually an urgency to that, and it is moving along. Yours truly got the job of managing the process of doing that. Along with various other people on the staff.

What I have up on the screen now is linked to the policy-development page. It is a draft ALAC statement on the public consultation process.

This document has a chapeau to it that describes its origin. I won't go into depth on that, because it's not very interesting.

It starts by describing the problems that At-Large has previously said related to public comments. Then it identifies a considerable program of specific suggestions on how to change the public consultation process.

This was required by Working Group 1 of the summit, as an input to its deliberations. It was felt too important to let go by. So now it's the subject of an ALAC statement.

A number of the features of this would address several of the points that you all have raised today -- as well as several of the points that Kieren has mentioned today. They have been mentioned by many other communities in ICANN -- not just At-Large.

They would have a corollary effect of not extending public consultation periods, but of extending the process in advance of a consultation period. Because they would -- amongst other things -- require that the documents to be consulted on would be posted a month before the consultation begins. To allow -- amongst other things -- for briefings to be held, for community members on the subject-at-hand, and to allow a volunteer community to plan their work -- by knowing in advance what was coming up.

It would also require more discipline on the staff's side, because we internally would have to - - 45 days before a comment period begins -- internally say to our colleagues... "We intend to consult on this subject at approximately this time."

Management would then be in a position to say, "Well, there are then going to be 15 consultations open during this period of time. That's not reasonable. These consultations are not that important. We're going to move them earlier or later."

So that we can reduce the peaks-and-valleys to consultations. There are something like 15 consultations open, now. I wouldn't even suggest to all of you that you should respond to 15 consultations at the same time.

I know that -- A -- you would throw things at me -- or throw me out the window, more likely. Or -- B -- you would not do it. There isn't an army of volunteers around to draft statements on every subject under the sun.

There will shortly be...

This is drawn from a solid document, as I mentioned -- which has been translated. Shortly, this statement will be presented in a translated form. But there's no consultation open on it, so the community has sufficient time to read it -- unlike what normally happens.

So the statement is open for comment by the community, until early July. I hope that you all will go over it. Obviously, if you have any suggestions to make, I'm sure everyone would welcome them.

I believe At-Large is the only community at the moment that is preparing something this detailed on the public-comment process.

When this was drafted, I did it in consultation with Denise. We both came to the conclusion that -- from policy's perspective -- we could live up to this if the community wanted it. We could internally do the planning in advance, to do the internal notices of what was coming and when it was coming. To prepare the supplementary materials that would actually augment the consultation process.

One of the other elements of this is to produce explanatory texts. Something like you see for the new gTLD process. Where different communities are provided with different texts, to highlight what are thought to be the main areas that each community would care about in relation to -- especially -- a complex consultation.

So that's really all there is on that subject.

Sébastien: Thank you, Nick.

Any questions for Nick? Alan and Kieren?

Alan: I haven't read the statement before, but I will tell you what my reaction is, as someone who participates in working groups that result in things going out for public comment. I'm horrified.

Although, it's a perfect environment for those who have to comment. At the other end of the extreme, for those that are working on the documents, to say that a working group that's going to have a draft -- something ready for comment -- and they have to give 60 days from the time that they have the document sort of ready until the comments come in... And it may be delayed by staff, because things are too busy... that almost puts a complete freeze on the policy-development process.

Although I understand the need, it sounds like it's going to have an opposite result on actually ICANN doing the work.

Sébastien: Kieren?

Kieren: Sorry. I forgot to mention earlier that the board committee on public participation has seen this. They wanted me to ask you if it was allowed to be referred to -- or what its status was -- in its meeting on Wednesday. They also wanted to encourage you to come, because they were going to discuss this very point.

So they wanted to know whether they're allowed to say, "And by the way, we've read this document," or what the status of it was. And just very briefly, I talked to Nick of this, as well...

From a personal perspective, I think the document is a little too prescriptive and a little unnecessarily critical. It might be more useful to say, "From the largest perspective, this would be much more valuable than this. We don't think this works effectively."

But to say, "I can already see -- having seen lots and lots of... I can already see quite a few other [SOs or ACs] going crazy with some of the specific suggestions."

But I think it's a good point to say... From our largest perspective, this would be the best scenario. Then we're trying to get best scenarios from everyone else, and then figure out what the middle route is.

Sébastien: Cheryl -- you wanted to take the chair back or you wanted to say something? Or you just wanted to say that we are back? And we are very happy to have you back here."

Cheryl: I would like to say that I am back, and we are 13 minutes over schedule. Consequently, Cheryl is not very happy. [laughter]

Sébastien: No, no. We are not. For the moment, we are just two minutes behind schedule. Sorry.

Cheryl: That's interesting. The schedule I had written down actually had it ending at 1500. Okay? Oh -- there you go!

Sébastien: Any last questions to Nick about the document? Okay -- Nick?

Nick: I just wanted to say that I think -- though I could be wrong -- that Alan, when you've finished reading it, you'll be less horrified than you are right now.

Alan: I prefaced it saying it's my initial reaction.

Sébastien: Thank you. Then once again, Kieren, thank you very much for coming to talk to us. Come back! We need you! I am sure that your efforts will give a better way for ICANN to go with public participation. We will help you as much as we can in the future. Thank you.

Kieren: Come invite me for each one. I love the arguments we have every time.

Cheryl: [laughter]

Sébastien: Thank you very much. Okay. Then I guess if I can have those schedules or the agenda of the meeting... I guess we are done and we can have a 10-minute afternoon break, now. We'll come back at 45? If you can be here. Thank you very much.

[session ends]