
DUBLIN – Updates on the Middle East Strategy
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BAHER ESMAT:

ICANN and part of the Global Stakeholder Engagement Team at ICANN, myself and Fahd work as Stakeholder Engagement Team in the Middle East. This session is our regular update that we provide during ICANN meetings on work taken through our regional strategy, Middle East regional strategy. We're going to have the slides up on the screen in a minute, I hope.

So the strategy, it's a journey that started almost three years ago, a little more than two years ago, when a group of community members came together – maybe 20-plus community members came together –to work on developing an engagement strategy for ICANN in the Middle East.

And by Middle East, by the way, I mean Arab countries plus Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. These are the countries covered by this work. So the working group that started working on this a couple of years ago identified a set of strategic objectives and strategic areas for ICANN to work on an aim to enhance ICANN engagement. And when we say engagement, we are cognizant that it's a two-day kind of path.

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So ICANN engage with community working with stakeholders on the ground in the regions, countries, and also community members. They come to ICANN and participate in our work. So can we go to, yeah, the next slide?

So today, after two years of this evolution, we have a number of developments and activities that were implemented by ICANN in cooperation with many community members from the Middle East as well as from outside. And we're going to talk about this in a little more detail. I'm going to give the sort of general overview and then my colleagues on the panel will dive more into the details.

So one of the outcomes of the strategy was the taskforce on Arabic script IDNs. This is the taskforce. It's a technical group that has been working on what we call the label generation rules for IDNs. Those of you following the work of the IDNs and IDN variants know that there is a need for rules in order to start deploying and use variants at the DNS root level. This is a taskforce of maybe 20-plus members from across the region – 33 members from across the region. And from outside, actually, because it includes experts in linguistics and in many other things.

Our colleague, Nabil Benamar from Morocco, is a member of this taskforce and is going to walk us through what has been done so

far. The one thing, I'm sure about is that Arabic IDN group has been in the forefront of this work and some of the work they have done, they were first implementing it and developing it.

The more items from the strategy work include two regional events that came out of the or as a result of the strategy working group recommendations. One is the Middle East DNS Forum and the other one is the Middle East and Adjoining Countries School on Internet Governance. These are two different events targeting two different set of audience. DNS Forum, obviously, is a forum for those interested in DNS-related issues, business issues, policy issues.

It's a place for them to come together and discuss those issues and how to further develop and strengthen the domain name industry across the region. The School of Internet Governance, this is a concept that was introduced several years back by community members, by Internet community members. It was introduced in Europe, in Latin America, in Africa, and what ICANN did in this regard simply is to support the sort of evolution of such a concept in our region. There was a need for that in order to build capacities in Internet governance issues.

More on the outcomes, we have a project that we embarked on a year or so, the DNS Entrepreneurship Center. This is an initiative that we started off with Egypt Telecom Regulatory Authority,

NTRA, which also runs the IDN top-level domain of MASR, and the goal here is to [support] strengthening the DNS or the domain name ecosystem in the region.

It goes a little bit further than developing capacities or building capacities to looking at ways of supporting existing businesses like registrars or existing ccTLD registries, how to work with them closely on having them develop strategic plans or increase number of [inaudible] and so forth.

So this is one key project that we started last year. It's a three-project. I'm going to talk about a little bit more, but let me also go to the next outcome. It's the DNS study – DNS market study – that was, again, one of the recommendation of this ICANN to develop a baseline study to identify challenges, opportunities in the area of domain names and DNS business in the region. So this was a project that we also started recently.

And you can see more about what we've achieved over the past year – or actually two years – in very sort of specific way of trying to present a matrix of progress and success in a blog piece that was posted a couple of months ago, and it's available on the ICANN website.

So regional meetings, as I said, we have the Middle East DNS Forum and the Middle East and Adjoining Countries School of IG. The good thing about these events is that once we started

enrolling or launching those events, we got feedback from community members from some countries asking whether we could also support similar events at national level.

So the Middle East DNS Forum started a couple of years ago. We had the second edition of this forum in Amman six months ago, but we also got, from working with the Internet community in Turkey, we had this request of trying to have something similar in Turkey. So we started or we launched Turkey DNS Forum last year, and next month, we're going to organize the second edition of this Turkey forum in Istanbul.

Same for the IG school. The community in Pakistan has been very active and very engaged with us in ICANN as well as global and general IG issues, and with efforts there by the academic community as well as the ISOC chapter in Islamabad, which also an At-Large structure, ICANN At-Large structure.

They launched a Pakistan school or national school in Pakistan on IG and that was organized last month. Fahd was there, and together with our colleagues from ISOC, Internet Society, as well as APNIC. Next slide.

So the DNS Center, as I said, the vision here is to have a repository for DNS knowledge and expertise in Africa and the Middle East. So it's not only for the Middle East. It's also for Africa. And reason being that developing DNS industry in Africa

was also key goal for the African strategy, so we're working closely with our African Engagement Team as well as our African community in that regard.

And, as I said, the goal is to develop a robust and healthy domain name ecosystem across the region. It's – yeah, I think we've covered that.

It's a three-year project, as I said. We just completed phase one of the project, which was the first year where we started with some sort of capacity building [activities] under different tracks – a business track, technical track, and we're looking into introducing a third track for DNS legal issues, as well, that are still in the work.

And we started now on, of course, we're continuing on the capacity building effort. This is something that will take time because our goal there is not only to go and provide or run these workshops and then go back, but to continue to work with community from ccTLDs, from registries and registrars, on how we can take the outcomes of those workshops and move things forward.

So right now, we're working with our colleagues at the NTRA in Egypt. We're helping them with sort of developing a business plan for the Center over the next couple of years, and they're also working on hiring a program manager for this project. The

Center will be incubated for the first couple of years at NTRA, and NTRA will contribute resources, financial as well as human resources, to help the Center in its sort of incubation phase.

Ultimately, we expect the Center to sort of continue as an independent entity. We're still looking at means of how to make it a sustainable sort of entity. We're not there yet. This is something that is still being sort of looked at. But at least for now, we have the events going on. We're working with NTRA on the business plan. If you can go to the next slide.

Over the past six months, we've run five different or maybe six different workshops in four countries. And again, when I say we, I'm not talking about ICANN. I'm talking about many community members and volunteers and experts – you can see the names on the screen – from ccTLD registrars to global registrars, ICANN-accredited registrars, technical [inaudible], gTLDs, consultants, and experts in the field.

As I said, the workshops that took place so far, they were in two different tracks. One is a business track that is looking into how to further develop the registry sort of business and operations, and the other track is a technical track where focuses more on the DNS operations and security issues.

Again, the good thing about training especially technical people is that we're doing also or we're trying to follow the train the

trainer concept. So we go to one of those activities, we train maybe 20-25 people. Out of those 25 people, we can get at least five people who can continue to work with us as co-trainers in future activities, and we've actually done that in one of the trainings we've had a couple of months ago.

We had two trainees to participate as co-trainers in there and we continue to work with those kinds of potential trainers to sort of deploy them in our different activities across the region. Next slide.

So these are just some pictures from events that we've done in the past few months in Cairo, in Tunis, Dubai, and Doha. And actually, some of those who hosted those events are here with us here in Dublin, and we're very grateful to them. Also our instructors and experts who help and have been helping us develop these programs. Glad to have Thomas Barrett from EnCirca here with us today and he's going to talk [and get] into more detail on his work in this [inaudible].

The study. This is a market study that aims to look into not only the domain name market or the domain name business in the region, but it also looks at the sort of wider Internet ecosystem. As I said, when the Strategy Working Group was working on developing [recommendation] of what is it that ICANN needs to do to help community and support community, there was a lot

of discussion about domain name market in the Middle East, how it looks like, whether we have data about the market, whether this data is sufficient, whether data this factual, and what does this data mean?

Whether it means that we need to do more with registrars or need to do more with policymakers, or we need to do more maybe with those who work outside the DNS domain. Because, again, talking about domain name business without considering the [inaudible] wider ecosystem, it doesn't make a lot of sense.

So, again, as ICANN, we don't have the expertise in house to conduct the study, so we issued an RFP a few months ago and the winning sort of bid or bidder was a consortium led by EURid, the .eu registry, together with some experts from the region. Go to the next slide, please.

EURid started working on this project in June, so it was like four months ago, and only last week we received the graph to study and we posted it on the website, on the ICANN website, to receive comments and feedback.

The study, as I said, it looked at the wider ecosystem. It looked at things like websites and [what] kind of websites that are being developed and hosted in the region. The use or usage of Internet and the behavior of the Internet users, the hosting business, more statistics about – can you go to the next slide? – language

and content, what languages are being used in the different countries in the region.

The study actually covered 12 countries from the Middle East and we were very careful in ensuring that variety of countries is being covered – large countries, small countries, countries that are more advanced or less advanced in ICT and Internet.

Tomorrow, we're going to have a dedicated session on this study. EURid are going to present more details on the study tomorrow at 16:15. So, of course, all of you are welcome to join this session. I think I'm going to stop here, and I'm going to turn it over to Thomas, who's going to talk to the work he's been doing with us with relation to the domain name industry development.

TOM BARRET:

Thank you very much. So as Baher said earlier, this is a summary of the activities that have occurred in the past year. So I've been involved in the first one was [inaudible] that business workshop. That was a five-day workshop held in Cairo, and the attendees represented about a dozen [inaudible] from Northern Africa as well as the Middle East.

The workshop, as a five-day workshop, was trying to cover. It covered ICANN policy, [inaudible] involved in running a DNS

business, the operational aspects of running a DNS business, [inaudible] aspects, the marketing aspects. So it's quite a bit to cover in five days.

But some of the takeaways from that certainly was with a dozen countries, they had very diverse environments. Different competitive environments, challenges that they were facing in their national markets. And that led us to the roadshow we'll talk about in a second.

So here's the overview of the business development workshop. As I mentioned, we first covered the business and policy of the DNS industry, what ICANN's role was and all that. We talked about business operations, new [inaudible] I conducted that with Michele Neylon from Blacknight Solutions.

The next workshop was actually conducted by UR [inaudible] along with Emily Taylor, and they focus more on best practices for running top-level domain registry, so they covered policies and procedures, how to handle [inaudible] with registrars, marketing and communications, and their social responsibility [inaudible] of being a trustee of [inaudible]. The third workshop was much more technical in nature [inaudible] the technical track.

This was a curriculum developed by NSRC, I believe, and so their topics included the DNS engineering basics, how the plumbing

of the Internet works from root servers or [inaudible] servers, etc., how resolvers work, forward and reverse DNS, debugging, and so forth. So fairly technical track there.

And then, finally, there was a track on DNS operations and DNSSEC [inaudible] well, which, again, was [inaudible] by NSRC, I believe.

So as I mentioned before, we did this five-day business track in Cairo. We were asked to take that on the road to visit particular countries, and we really redesigned the course from a five-day one-size-fits-all to a two-day marketing workshop. Our challenge is that we realized that because every country, every national market has its own challenges, we didn't want to have a generic type of workshop that was naive to what their national challenges might be.

We wanted to make sure that the workshop could be tailored to be very specific [inaudible] and operational changes that you might have. So we took this approach of something called a SWOT workshop [inaudible], and that allowed us to, because we had [everyone] who addressed the same national market, we actually examined their market with some specificity and helped them understand what they can do in terms of strategies in their [inaudible].

So we conducted this actually just last week. We were in Tunisia [inaudible] for the first two workshops, and I conducted this was Stephane Van Gelder [inaudible] registry.

They asked me to give you a quick overview of what the workshop consisted of. So SWOT actually stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Those first two are internal to the organization, then the last two are external.

So our reference point here is a ccTLD [inaudible] that's the organization we're looking at. Most of these either work for the registry or were resellers of the [registry]. They went through this brainstorming exercise, looking at their internal strengths and weaknesses, and then examining how this would apply to external opportunities [and] threats. As I said, the SWOT basically has them go through and they get into breakout groups and they have flip charts on the wall, and they examined, based from their perspective, what the opportunities and threats are facing their [ccTLD] market or domain name market and what their strengths and weaknesses are regarding that.

That's just day one. If you walk away from that, it actually sparks a lot of conversation, which we had in both workshops. But where it really becomes useful when we turn this around – so TOWS is actually just SWOT spelled backwards. But the idea of reversing that is it forces you to focus on the threats and

opportunities that the registry is facing in their local market and compare those opportunities with what strengths and weaknesses [inaudible].

They actually go through each one of their strengths for their organization say for the first one, how do we take advantage of opportunity one? Is there a way we can leverage that? Then that same first strength, we look at opportunity two, and how can we take advantage of that?

And again, with brainstorming groups, they came up with several dozen strategies how to optimize their strengths to the right opportunities and how to minimize what weakness they might have so that their potential threats are not [inaudible], as well.

That's a great input into their annual strategy planning for the registry. It's actually what the overall matrix looks like. So at the top, you see the external opportunities and external threats. We had [inaudible] identified a dozen opportunities. We did have them go through a prioritization exercise so they identified the top four, one of these categories, and then they came up with corresponding strategies, again, where they can use their strengths to maximize their opportunities. They can use their strengths to minimize their threats. They can] look at their [inaudible] and figure out how to minimize that by taking

advantage of opportunities. Finally, strategies that minimize the weaknesses and avoid [inaudible].

The benefit of this type of approach is that it's not a one size fits all. The content of the workshop really is generated by the attendees, so [inaudible] very specific to their local market, the threats and opportunities they see in their local [market]. It helps them go forward with a strategic plan that's very specific to their particular environment.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

[inaudible] so I would like to present on behalf of the taskforce members our taskforce, which is [related] Arabic scripts IDNs and its work that the work that have been done during this year. So the creation of the taskforce is under the Middle East Strategy Working Group in ICANN to study and the work, the [probability] and the issue of the IDNs, especially for the Arabic scripts.

As you know, it doesn't deal only with Arabic language but with the Arabic script. This is a script used by different language in the region. So the objective is to generate at our [inaudible] first main objective is to generate label generation ruleset for the root zone, which has been done for the moment, and we have received many comments and the deadline for comments is done, is over.

And now we will update our proposal based on the comments received from the community and from the [inaudible]. So

maybe in the Dublin ICANN meeting, we will celebrate our NGR proposal as the first one to have been done under the IDN [program] in ICANN.

So the next step, which we have already [mentioned], is to tackle the second level LGR, the Arabic script, and we will try to focus on some rules that will be more flexible than those that we have done for the top-level domains. Also, we will talk about Arabic scripts and [inaudible] registration data, universal [inaudible] of Arabic script IDNs.

For example, we can try to see how one can use an e-mail address with Arabic script. We will try to [rise up] the technical challenges around registration of [inaudible] operational software for registry and registrars. DNS security [matters] to Arabic script IDNs, which will be something new for us, and the technical providing some technical training material around Arabic script for the community.

So our taskforce is formed by currently 33 members from different regions, and applications still [inaudible]. We have members from 18 countries – Algeria, Australia, [inaudible], Germany, and Saudi Arabia and Morocco, [inaudible]. And these members are from different [inaudible] specialties and disciplines [inaudible] languages, we are talking about. We are [39] nine language [inaudible] that are using the Arabic

[inaudible] like Arabic, Malay, Saraiki, Sindhi, Pashtu, Persian, Punjabi, Urdu, etc.

And when we don't have enough expertise in some special scripts, we go and we seek help from different experts around the world. [inaudible] when we were studying and discussing and debating between some writings styles for the Koran, for example.

And also, I would like to mention that our members are coming from diverse disciplines, from academia, from [different] backgrounds, and linguistic experts [inaudible] registrar, national and regional policy bodies, and also from linguistics from universities.

[inaudible] as you can see, there are many Arabic script top-level domains signed and delegated like .tunis, .[inaudible], .masr, .[inaudible], .pakistan with this label character [inaudible] with .iran, .[inaudible], for example [inaudible] is the main issues that we have been facing during our work, and we received many [inaudible] from the community and from the IP.

For example, now we still have some comments from the IP that the last one is that two characters out of 128 [inaudible] in the repertoire are missing sufficient usage evidence. So our updated document will try to [inaudible] this issue and to try to find sufficient usage evidence. Some characters that we can use.

Our meta [inaudible] is just we have open core for work item within the taskforce, we have volunteers that developed the work item, they work item is [inaudible] for discussion. We have many conference call or weekly conference calls that you can find in the wiki. The work item [inaudible] generally. Discussion within the taskforce archived at public list so every record, every document used, every recording you can find it in the wiki and you can go back to the first one. All teleconferences [are recorded] and posted.

Our next step is to [inaudible] script AGR for the second level, already started because we have finalized the proposal for the [inaudible] level. A subgroup have been formed to prepare [a June] paper about AGR work. The paper is now [inaudible] to be submitted to journal. And the third step will be the universal acceptance. The group decided to join the work of ICANN regarding the universal acceptance.

BAHER ESMAT:

Okay. Thank you, Nabil. [inaudible], I think you also have an update on what's coming next.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

Okay. Thank you, Baher, and good afternoon, everybody. I'll just be talking quickly about our future work within the strategy. So

as my colleague Nabil mentioned, the taskforce on Arabic Script IDNs we'll be tackling two main [inaudible]. One is LGR at the second level and the other one is universal acceptance of Arabic script IDNs.

I can tell you for a fact that working with a group not very closely, we actually do [inaudible] in some languages, such as Farsi, some African languages that use the Arabic script. If you think you have the expertise in any of these languages or you think that there is somebody who can actually [inaudible] work of this taskforce, please reach out to us and I'll be sharing with you our e-mail ID shortly so that you can get in touch with us because you really need more volunteers.

We will continue to organize regional events, whether it's the Middle East DNS Forum or the Middle East and the joining [inaudible] governance. We usually have the Middle East DNS Forum during the first quarter of [every year] and the Middle East and Adjoining Countries School on Internet Governance happens during the second quarter.

If you think you're interested in hosting one of our future events, again, please talk to us after the session. Please write to us by e-mail and we'll be happy to take this forward.

We will be continuing to do more outreach activities to wider Internet communities in the DNS industry and outside. I mean,

we tend to attend quite a good number of events within the Middle East region. We get invited to speak at many of these events. And of course, we always look for new events where we can actually [inaudible] new stakeholders to educate them more on ICANN and [inaudible].

Gain more regional visibility through more media coverage and attendance of relevant fora. Last July, we were blessed [inaudible] from our communications team, my colleague, Luna Madi, who joined us to cover provide communications support for the IMEA region, and she actually works very closely with us – or we actually work closely with her – for media issues and usually we do these media roundtables. The media are more interested in what ICANN does.

As my colleague Baher mentioned, we are seeking partners to join forces with us on the DNS Entrepreneurship Center. So if you think you're working for a ccTLD or a TLD registrar or reseller, and you'd be interested in one of the workshops, which Tom Barrett explained earlier, please feel free to talk to us and we'll be happy take our e-mail ID. It's meswg@icann.org, and the two people who sit behind that e-mail is Baher and myself.

Write to us. We'll be happy to talk to you and see how we can work towards making the strategy as inclusive as possible for the entire region. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, [Fahd] Okay. I think we have a few minutes. Yeah, so 3:15. I think this is a good time to break for Q&A [inaudible] some comments from the floor. Naveed?

NAVEED HAQ: This is Naveed from Pakistan. I just was wondering if you plan to have some kind of quantitative measurement of how successful the strategy is. I mean, we see the [points] but not a quantitative analysis of how good it is. And I also don't find, I mean, if you [inaudible] the strategy will be reviewed and how long you continue for trying to review it, or it's a continuous process and you're open to reviewed at any point in time. Because I see that it was planned for three years and then the implementation phase, but do we have a review process of that?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Thank you, Naveed. On the first question about assessing progress and matrix, indeed, if you look at the strategy document itself or maybe the implementation plan, there were a number of matrices identified by community members – specific figures on whether number of domain names registered, number of registrars, business resellers. It was a quite a sort of comprehensive list.

And what we have been doing over the past two years is that by the end of each year – we’ve done that twice so far – we issue or sort of provide something like update or summary report on progress, highlighting some of this matrix and what have been done in these areas.

And we’re going to do this again this year. This is, as you said, and this maybe leads to the second question on what’s next after the three years. So the third year of the implementation ends by end of this fiscal year, ICANN’s fiscal year, which is end of June 2016. And the question we’re going to put out to the community members, probably we plan to do this for Marrakech and then have a face-to-face discussion with the community at Marrakech on exactly the same question.

What are we going to do next? Are we going to sort of renew the mandate of the working group and continue to work for another version of the plan for the next three years? Are we going to discontinue this working group and have another kind of process? So this question, I mean, is going to be discussed with you, and accordingly, we’re going to move forward to the next phase.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Just wanted to add that we actually have a wiki space for the strategy and you can find all the docs related to the strategy

over there. And in fact, you will find two documents that actually review the implementation plans for the first year and for the second year. And also, going back to the blog post, which Baher shared at the beginning [of the] intervention, you can actually see some numbers in there, as well.

Again, if you want this link, you can just write to us or talk to us [inaudible] with you via e-mail.

MEHRZAD AZGHANDI:

My name is Mehrzad Azghandi from Iran. Regarding Arabic scripts and IDNs, I wondered there are some universal acceptance and technical issues regarding IDNs, but the target market of IDNs, as I guess, it is [inaudible] in older people who are not had the chance, didn't have the chance to benefit from Internet. The leverage of these plan, IDN plan, it depends on the strategy advertising among these kind of people, and it seems [inaudible] between registrars and registries to advertise and increasing awareness among the peoples may help this market and is there any planning – ICANN has any planning to sit this registrars and the registries together in a corporation?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

There is this steering group called the Universal Acceptance Steering Group of top-level domains in general. And I think they

have... They're working on three different tracks, and one of them is actually education and capacity building. So we are aware that there are these TLDs, whether they are new gTLDs as ASCII or even as IDNs.

And I actually like give the mic to my colleague, Sarmad Hussain, who's the Senior Program Manager for IDNs who can maybe shed more light on your question. Sarmad, please.

SARMAD HUSSDAIN:

Hi. So as far as, I guess, more education is concerned, we have some – we're constantly producing material from IDN program, tries to explain two kinds of materials, one which reaches out to general community, tries to explain what IDNs are, and what the relevance of IDN is in the context of general user.

And then there is a separate kind of material, which is more targeted to the linguistic and technical community, which focuses on more details on what IDN programs currently undertaking at ICANN, how they can participate in the process and what exactly [inaudible] and if you're interested in finding out more about it, you can go to the IDN program website, which is access just ICANN.org/IDN. And please feel free to get hold of me.

MARK SVANCAREK: I'm Mark from Microsoft and I'm on the Universal Acceptance Steering Group. I just wanted to let everyone know that there is a report out from the Steering Group immediately following this meeting downstairs in [inaudible].

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: One last question. Anymore questions? Zakir?

ZAKIR SYED: This is Zakir. I'm a rejoining ICANN fellow from Pakistan. My question is for Nabil. As you mentioned in one of our slides that you've been working on developing software for IDN support for registries and registrars. So is it that you have an internal team working as part of the taskforce on developing this software or you've been working with industry vendors or something like that? Thank you.

NABIL BENAMAR: Thank you for your question. So in fact, we have diverse disciplines and diverse background in our team. And we use the XML file for any implementation of IDNs, and the software has not been developed from our team, but we are working with others from different parts, and we don't have... At my own view, we don't have the final software used for IDNs. But maybe Sarmad can give more feedback about software.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: So there's actually an IDN program update session on Wednesday. I'd encourage all of you to who are interested to find out more information on it. It's in the morning. But just to briefly address the current question. Basically, the generation panels of community script like the Arabic Script Panel are producing linguistic data, which is eventually represented in a machine format.

Currently, that format is also [inaudible] that IETF to convert that into a standard [inaudible] and based on that format, we are also developing tools with toolsets, beta versions that are available. If you use it, please contact us. There is going to be a presentation on it on Wednesday.

And this toolset is going to be eventually released with open source license or open license for registries and will eventually be available once it's developed for the community to use. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There are tools but not the software, so thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Thank you. Thank you, Nabil. Thank you, Sarmad. Any other questions? So thank you again for coming, thank you for joining us today. A quick reminder – Raf, please, go ahead.

RAFID FATANI: Sorry. [inaudible] an update. Sorry, rushed out really quickly there so I'm not sure if the DNS Forum, any arrangement around that. I know we kind of dropped offline for a little bit [inaudible] so busy in terms of organizing dates and times and the schedule as the ICANN staff or from the community regarding this.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You're talking about the next DNS Forum, right?

RAF FATANI: That's correct.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: So yeah. I mean, there have been some discussions both internally as well as I know Fahd is working the program committee and there have been some discussions there, as well. So one thing we're looking at right now but there's no decision yet about it is so the next ICANN meeting is in Marrakech and the [inaudible] community is considering having the Africa DNS forum held in Marrakech. This idea just came about recently.

And now they approached us to see whether having a joint kind of Africa/Middle East forum is something that can work. So we're looking into this as we speak. We're trying to assess pros and cons, and we'll definitely share with you updates as soon as more feedback and also information about ability of doing that. So this is [inaudible].

[BAHER ESMAT]:

Thank you, everyone. A quick reminder: those who are interested in the domain name study, please come to the session tomorrow at 4:15 PM. Thank you and have a good day.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]