
MARRAKECH – Middle East Strategy Update Session and the Way Forward
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BAHER ESMAT: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the ICANN Middle East Strategy Update. I'm Baher Esmat. I'm with ICANN. I'm part of the Global Stakeholder Engagement Team in the Middle East.

I'd like to welcome you all here in this session. I'd also like to note that we have interpretation services in English, French, and Arabic, so make sure you utilize them and speak the language of your preference.

The purpose of this presentation is to give a quick update on the Middle East strategy, and more precisely, to highlight some of the accomplishments of the strategy over the past three years now.

The journey started a little more than two years ago, or maybe three years ago, with a call for a working group to develop a strategy for ICANN in the Middle East. By the way, as the group began its work and began looking into issues that relate to the region, they realized that the Middle East as a term might not be adequate in describing the region. A suggestion was to call it Middle East and adjoining countries recognizing that there are countries there, like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, that are

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also part of the Middle East region as far as our engagement work at ICANN is concerned.

So this group got together and worked for about six months on developing a three-year strategy together with an annual implementation plan. We're currently in the end of year three, and the end of the strategy will be June this year. So we're getting very close to the end of this journey.

One of the main objectives of this session is to discuss with you a way forward. As some of you know – because actually some of you have taken part in this work and have developed the strategy – there were three main strategic goals in there between fostering two-way engagement between ICANN and community, building a strong and competitive domain name industry, and promoting multi-stakeholder Internet governance across the region. These were the main strategic goals.

The strategy also identified three main areas for ICANN, together with community, to work on in order to achieve and accomplish these goals. The strategic areas were DNSSEC and stability, domain name industry, and Internet governance ecosystem.

The key projects and initiative that ICANN has been working on to fulfill the goals fall under six main buckets. One on regional events and activities, another one on stakeholder participation,

L-root instances, DNS market study, DNS entrepreneurship center, and media outreach. I'm going to very quickly touch upon some of the key achievements in each of these areas.

On the regional events and activities, over the past two years and with help and support from you, we were able to launch a number of regional events. In order to foster more engagement and participation in ICANN work, we launched the Middle East DNS Forum in 2014. The first edition of this forum took place in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, and we had the second edition last year in Amman.

We're very happy and proud to announce that the third edition of the Middle East forum is going to take place in Tunisia, Tunis, in May this year on the fourth and fifth of May this year, hosted by the ATI – the ATI is the Internet agency of Tunisia – and also the registry of .tn and .Tunis, and we're very grateful for ATI for hosting this event.

We also launched a national version of this forum in Turkey. One of the reasons we had this initiative in Turkey is that Turkey is such a big country with too many things happening there and their needs are a little different than those of the rest of the region. They have quite a big market. Their ccTLD has close to 400,000 domain names registered. They have 8 ICANN accredited registrars with tons of resellers working there. So

we've had two editions of this forum so far, the last of which was in Istanbul last month

We also kicked off the Middle East Internet Governance School, and we had two editions so far, one in Kuwait and the other one in Tunis. Upon the request of the Internet community in Pakistan, we supported the launch of the Pakistani Internet Governance School, an initiative that many stakeholders in Pakistan, including ISOC Islamabad and other universities and stakeholders are involved in.

We also have run a number of workshops on different DNS aspects, including DNSSEC and other technical DNS issues, and also on DNS law enforcement issues. So we have been working with a number of [certs] across the region. We've offered, with the help of our security and stability team at ICANN, one- or two-day workshops in various countries, and this again, with help also from the local community who have generously hosted those events, like in Lebanon, in Egypt, and in other places.

At the same time, we've also been to other events. In addition to events that ICANN is sponsoring or organizing, we've also been to other regional events, like MENOG, like the [EH]. [EH] is the event for the ARAB EDUCATION Networks. We've been to Arab Net. We've been to the regional GSMA meetings, [inaudible] the

Internet Governance Initiative in the MENA region, and many others.

The next slide in fact depicts some of the events that we've participated in. Just to let you know, over the past two years, we, as ICANN staff, participated in more than 50 events in the region, from events that are organized by private sector, governments, civil society, academia, technical communities, and so forth. This is part of the two-way engagement, so in addition to asking people to come to ICANN meetings, ICANN also goes out and participates in regional and national events.

Stakeholder participation: this is stakeholder participation in ICANN and ICANN policy work.

The Taskforce on Arabic Script IDNs is one of the most successful initiatives in our region. It was one of the recommendations of the Middle East strategy.

But let me also emphasize the fact that work on IDNs in this region started long before the Middle East strategy was put together. It actually started even before I, myself, joined ICANN. This is an effort that started way back in 2002 or 2003 with leaders from the region in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and other countries who took on their shoulders the responsibility of pushing the Arabic domain names to implementation.

I was talking to the taskforce the other day, and I noted that I remembered exactly ten years ago, we were here in Marrakech. I think it was ICANN 25 or 26 in Marrakech, and one of the key debates at that meeting was IDNs.

Back then, we didn't have IDNs at the top level. It was only available at the second level. The solution was not satisfactory for our Arabic script or Arabic language community, so today, we're very proud of the work of the IDN Taskforce because simply, they were the first taskforce to complete the work on the label generation rules. They're going to actually announce this work this week in Marrakech, so I think a word of congratulations to this group on their excellent work and excellent achievement.

As part of our stakeholder participation in ICANN, we started a practice of regular webinars on different topics. We started this last year, and because the work of the IANA transition and ICANN accountability has been the focus of our work in the past couple of years, most of the webinars were dedicated for this topic. But we also had other webinars on other regional engagement work, and we are committed to continuing this practice going forward.

We were discussing, Fahd and myself, recently whether we want to evolve this. In addition to having webinars that provide general updates on what's going on at ICANN, we could also

dedicate some of those sessions to address specific topics or maybe address or target specific communities, like maybe having webinars with the Civil Society, or webinars with government or GAC members and so forth, so this is just an idea.

Also, we've seen community participation with remote hubs for the ICANN meetings. Many hubs have been hosted over the past couple of years in a number of countries across the region.

Also, as part of the community participation in ICANN, we've seen an increase in memberships in some of the ICANN supporting organizations, advisory committees, and constituencies. Again, credit for this goes to you. It goes to the community because, you guys, when you come to ICANN and you engage in the work of ICANN, you go back to your countries, you spread the word, and you work with your communities on raising awareness about what ICANN does, explaining why it's important for your communities to participate. So in the past couple of years, we've witness an increase, not only in the number of fellows and participants of the ICANN next gen program, but also in the participation in the various constituencies, from NCSG, ALA, NCUC, more members joining the GAC, more members joining At-Large, and so forth.

This slide illustrates the increase in the number of participants at ICANN meetings and also the number of fellows that come

from the Middle East and North Africa, and of course, you can see the increase maybe starting June 2014. The London meeting was peak probably because it was London, not because it was ICANN meeting. But then we've also seen a good turnout in meetings, like in Singapore last year and in Dublin, which was last October.

The number of fellowships also increased a little bit. Maybe we had little turn out in Los Angeles, ICANN 51, and that was due to visa issues.

On the ICANN security and stability, which was one of the key strategic areas under the Middle East strategy, we've been working with ISPs and network operators around the region to encourage them to host an instance of the L-root. L-root is the root server that ICANN runs, and our DNS technical team at ICANN has been very active in spreading this root around the world.

So in the past couple of years, we've seen a new instance deployed in Dubai, Islamabad, Lahore, and Amman. Just yesterday, there was an additional instance deployed here in Morocco in Rabat, and I did forget to mention Tunisia. ATI hosted an L-root, as well.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We have an instance in Tunisia, too.

BAHER ESMAT: So this is in the past two years. Was it in the past two years? I'm not reporting on one [everywhere].

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: No. 2013.

BAHER ESMAT: So this is a glitch on our part. Thank you, ATI, again.

Now, also in our effort to foster more engagement with community members and key stakeholders, we've signed an agreement with the Egyptian National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA) to establish the DNS Entrepreneur Center, and I'm going to talk about this center in a little more detail. But very quickly, the main goal of the center is to develop a network of experts in the various aspects of DNS across the region. So this network is not going to be in Egypt. This network is going to be across Africa and the Middle East. We're working with many partners on building capacities and preparing the next generation of experts in DNS across the region.

We also signed a MOU with the Qatar CRA (the Communication Regulatory Authority of the state of Qatar) on promoting the work of ICANN, particularly promoting the principles of multi-stakeholder Internet governance.

Also, in support for our work in developing the domain name industry in the region, we signed an agreement with EURid. EURid is the European top-level domain, .eu, and EURid has been one of our partners in developing the DNS industry in the region. They participated in more than one workshop together with us, together with the DNS center, and they also conducted the Middle East DNS market study, which I'm going to talk about in a few minutes.

The DNS Entrepreneurship Center: over the past year, we started this project in March. Although, the agreement was signed in June 2014, the actual work began in March last year with the first workshop that was held in Cairo on the DNS registry best practices. Since then, we have organized more than nine workshops. We have trained more than 150 people from 15 different countries. Part of this training, by the way, is on DNS technical issues and part of it on legal issues.

Very recently, we had a workshop on domain name dispute resolution, part of it on DNS business and marketing strategies, and we had a very focused workshop on, we call it, the SWOT

workshop. This is a workshop that does SWOT analysis on the national DNS market, so we go and work with ccTLDs, they invite the registrars, the resellers, the stakeholders, and we sit in a room for two days doing SWOT analysis and team exercises and coming up with recommendations on where the challenges are, where the opportunities are, and what needs to be done to further develop and grow the local market.

We've done this workshop in four countries so far – in Tunisia, in Qatar, in Emirates, and in Amman – and we're looking forward to doing more of this in the coming months.

One key track in the center's capacity building program is train-the-trainer. So as I said, the goal is not only to conduct training and that's it. The purpose is to make sure that we're building local capacities and developing local expertise, so we've been very much focused on training the trainer concept.

So far, I could say that we have a success story to tell under the technical track of this project. We've had a train-the-trainer session last year in Dubai. We trained more than I think nine or ten people. This is very specific training. We're targeting people with expertise in DNS technical issues, and the good news about this track is that, today, we're working with three or four potential trainers from the region from Tunis, from Egypt,

Pakistan, and Turkey. Some of them actually participated in trainings that we organized this year.

In 2015, they participated as co-trainers, so what we plan to do from now on in any technical training that ICANN is going to organize, is that we're going to send a lead trainer from our side, but then we're going to ask one of our community trainers to participate as co-trainers, and after maybe one, two, three, or four trainings, they will become experts themselves, and they will be able to go and conduct trainings themselves.

Of course, our goal is to replicate this story in other tracks, like the policy track or the business track. But of course, for the technical track, it was a bit easier because we have plenty of technical expertise in our region. They just need the opportunity to be able to participate as trainer or co-trainers and acquire the required confidence for this job.

The DNS market study: this was another recommendation that came through the Middle East strategy. The community asked ICANN to conduct a DNS market study to analyze the market, to get some data about this industry in the region, and to put some recommendations forward. Because ICANN, as staff, we don't have this expertise in house, so we put out a bid, a call for consultants and experts to deliver this study.

The bid went to EURid, as I said, .eu, and they started the work back in May 2015, I guess. Right before the Dublin meeting, they submitted a draft report on the study. It was posted for public comments, discussed in Dublin, and the public comments continued after Dublin. The final report was posted, I guess, last week.

So today, we have the study available, and we're going to have more detailed discussion about this study tomorrow. EURid is going to present on this study tomorrow. We have a session sometime tomorrow. It's DNS industry in the Middle East. I think this is the title. You can find it on the schedule, and I would encourage you to come and participate in this. It's at 4:30 PM in the same room tomorrow. Okay, it will be about the study and a couple of other initiatives that community members will update us on.

I think this is the last area I'm going to update you on. Media outreach: when we started the work on the Middle East strategy, some community members rightly noted that ICANN is not visible in any local or regional media across the Middle East. Oftentimes, we participate in events and those events go unnoticed by media, so we started to provide more resources in media.

I think it was a couple of years now when we had our EMEA director of media, Luna Madi – she joined ICANN in 2014 – working out of London so far. She will eventually move to Istanbul to work from our hub in Istanbul. Luna comes from the region. She speaks the language. She speaks other languages, as well.

What we've done so far is that, in any regional event that we organize as ICANN, like DNS forums, like summer schools, like other major outreach activities that we do around new gTLDs, around other topics, we make sure that we invite media. We call them media round table. We invite key media people from the country or the region. We provide them with a brief on what's going on, what ICANN does, what the meeting is about and so forth, and then we follow up with them on maybe articles or news to be published on their outlets.

We have also had different and several interviews over the past couple of years. I, myself, have done at least six or seven interviews with different media outlets. You can see the list of countries, though, the font is very small – in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates.

Of course, we have also the ICANN Emea newsletter. The newsletter is available in three languages: French, English and Arabic. It started as a quarterly newsletter. It has recently

become a monthly newsletter to provide the community with recent updates and highlights on what's going on in EMEA.

This chart shows the number of articles and news that were published in the region. You can see that, I guess, Turkey has the largest number, followed by United Arab Emirates, and then Egypt. Of course, the reason that 2016, which is the very chart to the right, is not alike as the other two is because we're still in the beginning of the year.

Next steps: now, this is actually a question to all of you about next steps. As I said, we are coming very close to the end of the three-year mandate of the Middle East strategy. By the end of June, we're going to deliver our final report on the three-year strategy.

But from now until then, we need to have this conversation with you, and we started the conversation actually a couple of weeks ago. When we had our webinar, we put the same question to those who were on the webinar, and then we also sent the question to the various regional mailing lists about what is next.

With that, I precisely mean, when we started this journey three years ago, we had this Middle East Strategy Working Group – okay, I'm not sure I can see this. Thank you, Ali.

We had the strategy working group – okay, so probably need to do something to get it on the screen. Anyway, I don't have any other slides. This was the last one I guess. So we had the Middle East Strategy Working Group that took the full responsibility for this work, and they also followed up on the implementation, so they also provided advice and an oversight role on the implementation of the strategy over the past two, three years.

So now the question is whether we want the same group to continue or we want maybe another group with another kind of structure to be established, whether we want to have a closed group, whether we want to have an open-ended group, whether we want to maintain the membership of this group for people who come from the region, or we want to open it for others who come from outside. All these are questions, and of course, there are other questions on the modality of works, but this will depend on the model that we will agree upon.

But in any case, this is a question for all of you. Actually, one of my goals or, let's say, takeaways I want to take from this session is to get your feedback and views on this very question of what is next. But of course, we're going to open the floor for comments or questions on the entire update that I provided.

So with that, I thank you very much for listening, and now, the floor is open for questions and comments. Just a reminder, we

have our interpretation services so feel free to speak the language of your choice. The headsets are available for those who need them. Thank you.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN:

I'm Adiel from Pakistan. I'm a next gen member.

Since you mentioned there is one DNS [sector] from Pakistan, I would like to know its name. You had mentioned that in that one [inaudible] be from ICANN, so is there an eligibility criteria or any restriction from the part of ICANN, any financial restriction? Or there has to be this number of people, students, network operators, or any restriction like that?

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Thank you Adiel, and thank you, everybody for joining this session. I'm Fahd Batayneh from ICANN, and I work with Baher covering the region, as well.

Answering your question, the name of the person is Naveed Bin Rais, and he's from Maju. I am sure you know him.

Actually, when we kick started this whole initiative of train-the-trainer, we actually reached out to technical people who we actually know have competency and have capability and actually maybe being able to deliver such kind of training

programs. Of course, I think one of the requirements is that you should be involved in DNS operations, DNSSEC in your day-to-day job.

So we reached out to a couple of folks that we know actually benefited from such past trainings or have worked heavily or extensively on DNS operations and DNSSEC, and then we had colleagues from within ICANN and NSRC who actually evaluated the applications that we received. Towards the end, we chose nine potential trainers from different countries within the region in hopes that they can actually be future trainers within their country or within their sub-region.

As Baher mentioned, we are working in Pakistan with Naveed on actually having some of these training programs in the near future. We are still in the initial stages if I may say, and of course, once we have more information, we'll definitely be updating the community in Pakistan on what we are offering with Naveed and with any other potential trainers.

Actually, we recently have been receiving questions on when will we be opening the next round of train-the-trainer. Frankly speaking, we actually need to utilize the current set of trainers before we decide that, yes, it's time to actually train a new set of trainers. So, for us, okay, we have a train-the-trainer program, but our goal is not to have 100 trainers and then not benefit from

anybody. We need to utilize these guys, we need them to have expertise, and then we can move on and train more people.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thank you, Baher, for this presentation. I will talk for experience of you.

BAHER ESMAT: Can you please introduce yourself for the [inaudible] participants?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yes. I'm [inaudible] from Tunisia. I will speak of our experience with you and the strategy. It was a very good experience. I think we have done everything with you, but it's our turn now to give you feedback after the last workshop that you have done. We are executing your recommendation, but we need time to give results.

What I wanted to say is that the Middle East strategy is not only the engagement of the group who is working now. It's also an engagement from the countries, and we should be active in this program with you.

What I wanted to say also is that we want to continue in this experience [inaudible] until countries give you tangible results. This is not the case now, so we want to continue with you in this experience. Thank you.

OSAMA TAMIMI:

Good evening. I'm Osama Tamimi from Palestine. I have a comment on the fellowship program.

I participated in three programs, 51, 52, 55, and I noticed that the Arabic participants are really limited in those programs. So I expected that there will increase in the number of the participants when it comes to Arab participants in the fellowship program. I think we need to increase the opportunity for those people who come from this neighborhood. Thank you very much.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

We in ICANN thank you for your question, Osama. We have five main geographic areas in this Arab world, and we divide them into eight. We have a maximum of 50 seats for these regions when it comes to the fellowship program. Hence, we have six seats for every region, so the Middle East and MENA area will receive probably six seats. But when you go back to the slide that Baher talked about, you will see between 11 to 12 people.

They have participated in ICANN meetings, and this is considered to be a precedent in our work.

Here's another observation. Although we have eight geographic different areas, when it comes to the fellowship program, we find many applications that come from our part of the world. Even in Dublin, 25% of the applications came from the Arab World. So if we talk about 12% to 13% of our applications are coming from the Arab world, it is considered to be satisfactory.

Not all the applications are at the same level. Hence, we feel that there are actually a good presence so far in ICANN meetings from this part of the world.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

My name is [inaudible]. I come from Tunisia. I represent the Tunisian Internet Agency, ATI, and I'm from the technical department. I'd like to switch to the Arabic language just to join our colleague to explain some points.

First of all, I would like to say that an idea was launched in ICANN meeting 54 with Baher to introduce an Arab accession in ICANN meetings targeting an Arabic speaking audience. I would like from Baher to explain to us the steps that we are going through this.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you. This is an idea that was introduced from [inaudible] in Dublin and that was introduced to Fahd: that we allocate some time or a session on ICANN's agenda that we will bring the Arab communities together. Of course, it has to be planned ahead of time and what will be the items of this meeting that would be discussed?

Actually, that was also available in planning to Marrakech and it was on the schedule. But because of the number of the sessions here in Marrakech – we have almost more than 400 sessions only in this week in Marrakech, so the time that was allocated for the session was Saturday, which is the beginning of the week. Me and Fahd were afraid.

As you know, most of the participants will arrive later than Saturday, so we were afraid, especially that would be our starting point, that we would not witness a successful meeting because of the absence of many participants. So Fahd and I reviewed this and we decided to postpone this event and coming events, especially to listen to your opinions on how should be the format of this meeting because we have different formats for these kinds of meetings.

Yet, the idea is an excellent idea. We are well receiving it and we are willing to implement it. Thank you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you very much. This is Muhammad Shabbir from Pakistan. I am a new ICANN fellow. Thank you very much for a very elaborative presentation and explanation on the happenings in the MENA region.

I have two points to make. One is that, so far, you have talked about training the trainers. One experience that I had after attending this that you referred to the Pakistan School of Internet Governance, pkSIG. It was really a wonderful experience.

After that, we had a workshop on web accessibility in Pakistan in December with the Corporation of Internet Society. During that exercise, I actually audited about 100 websites from Pakistan. It was saddening that most of the websites were not accessible. I know that ICANN deals with technical parts, but these are the technical people that actually make the websites, write the languages, and write the codes for these websites.

Are there any initiatives or plans that you have for making the content accessible, or when you are training the trainers, do you include anything to tell them that, yes, you need to make the

website accessible for persons with disabilities, per se, or persons with different languages? Yes, I know there are websites initiated in different languages.

Relating to this is my suggestion that if you are initiating new programs, such as the Middle Eastern school on Internet governance, any other schools on Internet governance, there could be some sessions on web accessibility and need. Actually, it is the business that flourishes if you make your website accessible. Thank you.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Thank you, Shabbir, and thank you for joining us.

In terms of ICANN, ICANN has a really limited mandate. We are mandated with names, numbers, and protocol parameters. In other words, we are not involved in spam, we are not involved in content, and even when it comes to accessibility.

However, regarding the various websites ICANN runs, whether it's the main ICANN website, or even the At-Large website or the GNSO, my colleagues actually take accessibility issues into account. For a fact, there is actually a working group on accessibility within ICANN. If you haven't been in touch with my colleague, I'll be very happy to actually get you in touch with her and maybe she'll be happy to integrate you within that working

group and actually you can be part of that. I hope that addresses your question.

HAMZA BEN MEHREZ: Thank you, Baher. Thank you, Fahd. I have maybe a simple question if I can say.

What are the challenges that you faced while devising that Middle Eastern strategy in the Middle East, especially that ICANN has a multi-stakeholder policy acts and a multi-stakeholder policy framework? But major stakeholders in the MENA region opt for a capacity and in the policy decision making, so there are a lot of problems and loopholes. So what are those challenges and how can you learn from those challenges to better devise a better strategy in the future?

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you. Thank you, Hamza, for the question. Indeed, like in any effort or process, there must be challenges. In the case of ICANN and regional engagement in the Middle East, challenges were not only related to ICANN, but there are more broader challenges, mainly political challenges. We all know the situation in the region, and such political unrest and situation in the region does affect our engagement work, as well.

So just to give you an example, there are at least four countries in the region that neither Fahd nor myself can go to anymore, at least in the coming near future. The engagement with their communities becomes more challenging.

But apart from that, when it comes to ICANN, when it comes to Internet governance issues, one of the challenges is resources. Most of our stakeholders, whether private sector, government, non-government, are groups. They work with very limited resources. Mainly, I'm talking human resources, and in that case, human capacities.

It's not easy to get an organization to send more than maybe one person to attend ICANN or even dedicate more than one staffer for ICANN work, let alone other IG fora and issues and so forth. So resources certainly is a key challenge.

Yes, please?

BERAN GILLEN:

Thank you, Baher. My name is Beran Gillen. I just wanted to answer some of the questions that Shabbir raised about accessibility.

I am a member of At-Large and a former member of the ALAC, and we do a lot of work on accessibility. We actually have a

working group on accessibility. There's also a cross-community working group on accessibility, which is meeting on Wednesday at 10:45 in Roseiraie, so I would be glad to give him information on that, and then we can follow up this conversation. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Thank you very much. Just in response to your question whether to continue or not, I think you and Fahd have done wonderful work. You have engaged all the region and initiated a lot of projects as you have mentioned, so I think you must continue.

Secondly, in response to Shabbir's question, actually, it is everyone's responsibility who is managing a website, who is the government; it does not lie on the ICANN. So your point is noted and it will be communicated to ISP industry, at least in Pakistan being the representative of telecom regulator in Pakistan. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Thanks, Baher. My name is [inaudible]. I'm from Egypt. I just wanted to follow up on a comment presented earlier by the colleague from Tunis and Baher's response to it regarding the ICANN week schedule.

If you look at the schedule, it's packed up. It's insane. There are so many sessions running alongside each other, it's impossible to attend every meeting you want to attend. So Baher is completely right in saying setting up special sessions is challenging, and that's to say the least.

But I do want to make one comment regarding tomorrow's session on the DNS study for the MEAC region. I think it was an extremely unfortunate decision to schedule that tomorrow. Tuesday is Constituency Day at ICANN meetings. That's when all the groups get together and discuss their own internal issues. It's very important for those groups to meet with each other.

So you're going to have a big block, possibly not from the protocols community or the numbers, but as far as the names are concerned, the registrants, registrars, and registries will all be in closed meetings with their groups at the time, and you have a big block of the community who will not be able to participate in an extremely important session.

I would respectfully ask that you do not schedule these sessions on constituency days in the future. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, [inaudible], and well noted. We have [inaudible] and then the gentleman and there is one here and then hannan. [inaudible]

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Thank you. A very short question, June 2016 and the way forward. Do you have any anticipation on the major action lines for the future or something like that?

BAHER ESMAT: Well, we have some broad lines. We're going to continue on some of the initiatives that we've already started, like the DNS Center, the regional events. We're going to build on what has been achieved so far to grow those events.

Now, there are other, I would say, ideas that are still very premature on how to strengthen our engagement with communities, making more ICANN related content available in local languages. ICANN is making all the materials available in six UN languages, plus Portuguese, so maybe making them available in a non-UN language, like Urdu, for example, so we're talking to some of our friends in Pakistan about this. So there is continuation of what we have already started, and there are some other ideas that are not mature yet. This is also part of the

exercise we're going to all do together from now until probably the end of this term of the strategy.

While I have the microphone – and because [inaudible] just reminded me – I just want to note two things regarding two project initiatives that also relate to our presence here in Marrakech this week.

One, there is an initiative for North African IGF, and [inaudible], our dear friend from Tunisia, is leading on this effort. There is a meeting scheduled this week on Thursday at 10:30 AM on the North African IGF. So that's one.

The other announcement I want to note – it is something I just want to highlight – the DNS Entrepreneurship Center has a booth here at the exhibition area at the meeting. The director of the center, Hadia Elminiawi, from Egypt, is present here with us. So she's also here to engage with you and get to know you.

With that, I'll return it back to the room. Please.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

This is [inaudible] from Pakistan. Can you please share if you are having any collaboration model for regional initiatives, like how we are currently working on the Asia Pacific School on Internet

governance? It's at its development phase, and we look forward to the ICANN.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Thank you, [inaudible]. Actually, in our regional engagement, we always like to work with our ISOC partners, whether it's ISOC or even the Regional Internet Registries, whether it's RIPE NCC, AFRINIC or even APNIC. For example, in the case of the school on Internet governance, it was actually ICANN, ISOC, and APNIC on board. We didn't do this alone.

We always like to collaborate with our ISOC partners, and at the same time, we also like the local communities to actually get hold of such initiatives, and then carry it on their shoulders.

Now, you mentioned the Asia-Pacific School on Internet Governance. My colleagues at the APAC Hub in Singapore are actually closely involved in that initiative, and I'm sure they have plans for that event. I'm sure they'll be working that out together with you and your colleagues who are working on the APC [inaudible] initiative.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

I'm asking just because three of the countries are part of Asia Pacific region; Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Yeah. Okay, so different organizations have different classifications when it comes to regions. For us, in ICANN, our region consists of the 22 Arab states, plus Turkey, plus Iran, plus Afghanistan, plus Pakistan. It's worth emphasizing that actually when we do our work in North Africa, we actually work very closely with our colleagues in the Africa team.

BAHER ESMAT: Let me add by saying that geographical regions are always confusing. At the ICANN level, there are only five regions, and you're right. Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran fall under Asia Pacific, so if you want to participate in the At-Large, you would be part of Asia Pacific. There is no Middle East within At-Large.

However, as far as ICANN engagement work is concerned, we have a number of sub regions if you will, so Middle East is one of those sub regions, and it includes, as Fahd said, the 22 Arab countries, plus others like Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you. Please introduce yourself.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'm [inaudible] from Jordan. I'm from the Next Generation. I would like to know the strategy for ICANN going forward. You were there, and I know that you were attending. This is a live example for our continuation with our colleagues and getting introduced to others, getting to know them, and then the ICANN meetings do happen and then we get to see them face-to-face. Some of the faces are familiar, and we get to see them and discuss those issues one-on-one.

The strategy for ICANN: one of the strategies is getting the communication going with ICANN, and when we say this, it doesn't mean that basically we only have to deal with the stakeholder approach or the policies. No. You are very helpful to us being a local rep and talking and discussing with your colleagues and the people that basically have the stakeholder approach and your local society, and we as ICANN, how we can assist you in that?

Here is what is really great with this. One of the good things that you can work with is looking at trying to do lectures for your colleagues. Have them apply for scholarships. There are so many options that you can pick from.

HANNAN:

It would be really helpful, Baher and Fahd, if you briefly present the impact of your work in Egypt and Tunisia so people understand why ICANN is doing a lot of work to promote the DNS industry in the MENA region. I think representatives from the centers are present here and maybe they can brief us on the impacts so far.

Another question is about ICANN strategy in the Middle East. I understand it's finishing by June 2016, and I'm really not sure if you're planning to extend the strategy to cover a certain number of years. Have you decided on that? Are you still thinking about it?

The third thing is about the functions of a working group. I think Baher asked a question whether it's helpful for you to maintain a working group or the advisory group that you have for the strategy, or remove it. So have you decided already what's the plan for the future? That would be great if you can brief us.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you, Hannan. I'll take your second question about the strategy and the plan moving forward. In the case of Egypt and Tunisia, maybe Hadia or [inaudible] can speak to that a little bit.

The short answer to your question is, one, we don't have a complete plan yet. Hence, our discussion today. But of course, as I said, there is work that is already ongoing, and we will continue. We're committed to continue in this work. Whether this is going to be as part of an annual implementation plan building on the same strategy, whether it's going to be a review of the three-year strategy based on what has been accomplished, this is the kind of thing or decision that is not taken yet.

I imagine that we will continue with maybe another three-year strategy. That's my personal thinking, but the question remains on modalities of work and how we're going to ensure that community is engaged and is part of this work. Hadia?

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Regarding the impact of the work of the center so far, the center so far has done the nine workshops. If we look at the workshops, train-the-trainer, for example, we had nine trainers. Two of them are already used as co-trainers in following workshops, like the DNS operation and the DNSSEC.

If we look at the SWOT analysis for the DNS local markets in the four countries – I know and I'm sure that [inaudible] will talk about that – they are taking the recommendations that came

out of the analysis, and they are working on it in order to implement it and see how they can. But the result of this implementation is not out yet.

Also, if we talk about the SWOT analysis that were also done in Amman and in UAE and Qatar, it's the same. The results are not out yet. But definitely, they are working on the recommendations. We need maybe six months or more to see after implementing the recommendations where do we start to know the true impact on the market.

I would say, also, there's another impact that maybe we cannot see straight away. But coming out of the capacity building workshops and building expertise and also on the workshops that talked about policy, also we prepare individuals to start to maybe build expertise for people who can engage with ICANN work from the community. Right now, I cannot tell you, well, we have now four or five that can do that, but maybe we have hundreds or more. But coming out of the workshop, we also build expertise and decision makers that can later be able to participate in ICANN's decisions and policy making.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Just before we take more interventions, we actually have a comment from our friend and colleague, Walid Al-Saqaf from Yemen.

He says: “First of all, my sincere apologies for not being there in person due to compelling personal reasons. As someone who has been engaged in ICANN in the past – and not so much now – but more engaged in ISOC, I wish to emphasize what Baher had stated about the challenges in the MENA region. In particular, I wish to point to the need to pull our resources together as representatives of different sectors to collaborate from the grass root level to help ICANN, ISOC, and other organizations be more effective. I wish to single out the Arab IGF and invite actors from the Arab region to push for more multi-stakeholderism and bottom-up approach. It’s not easy, but we’ve got to try, and we are all required to work together to make this happen.”

Just for the record, Walid Al-Saqaf is actually an executive council member in ISOC.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yes, okay. I will talk a little about our experience with Baher’s team. In fact, Baher has shown already the results at certain levels. He talked about L-root, and [inaudible]. He talked about the program of training-the-trainer, and we have a co-trainer

already in Tunisia that had followed the program. It's good to have trainers in these items, DNSSEC and others from Arabic countries, the Middle East, and adjoining countries.

About the program of the workshops: in fact, we had a SWOT DNS workshop in Tunisia with Baher, with his team. We made a study of our existing DNS market with a SWOT study within the registrar and the registry, and we fixed the role of everyone, the registry and the registrars. There were some recommendations that we should do work together.

We drew with the registrars a plan to act seeing these recommendations, and as I said before, I have to give feedback to Baher after perhaps six months and see if everything is going good or not, and perhaps we'll need some support from them in other items. That's it.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

[inaudible] ccTLD registry of Sudan. I just want to ask about the DNS Entrepreneurship Center in Cairo. I want to know what's the idea or the next steps for the ICANN. Do they encourage other such centers in Africa or in the Middle East, or do you want people to use this center more and you will give support for people from such countries, like Suda, to go there and have training, and they will get support for that, or will it be by

reaching people in other countries by making events there using that center?

In fact, I'm asking this because I already had a meeting with the guys there in the DNS center, and it was really very, very nice and a very good idea, and we want to know what's the next steps for it. Thank you very much.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you, [inaudible]. Before talking to next steps, just to clarify, the center is currently in its second year. As I indicated quickly at the beginning, it's a three-year project, so currently, we're halfway to implementation, halfway to get the center operation up and running and so forth.

So in terms of next steps, for this year, we will continue with our capacity building efforts. That's from our side as ICANN and community helping with that.

From the center's side, so far, the center has been incubated at NTRA. It hired a program director, Hadia, and now the center is going to work on a strategic plan for the center, for the next three to five years identifying what their key priorities are and so on.

I can say that I think for the next year, year and a half, work on capacity building will continue. We may see other priorities coming. Maybe we'll realize that focusing more on the business track makes more sense for this region than maybe legal track just as an example. But capacity building will continue.

At the same time, the center, from their side, will strive to forge partnerships with community stakeholders, experts, and ccTLDs. I know that this week, they're talking to ccTLDs in the region to figure out how they can work together. Forging partnerships between the center and other entities is key for the center in the next phase.

So this is a nutshell of where we are and where we're heading.

HIBA ABBAS:

Hiba Abbas from Sudan. Regarding the outreach activities, I just want to know if there is a feedback or channel to provide the comments and feedback you got from the community to the ICANN and ICANN structure. If there is, what is the process to continue with that, and if there is a result or something that is coming out of this?

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Do you mean feedback on outreach we do?

HIBA ABBAS: Yeah, so part of the outreach. You are participating in some of the events in the region, and definitely, you are getting some of the – I don't know – formal and informal comments on some of the ICANN work. Is there a formal channel to feed that back into the ICANN, or how it be treated?

FAHD BATAYNEH: Usually, at ICANN, when we do outreach or we attend events, we actually mingle and network with people. Some of those people would show initial interest in ICANN's work, and we follow up with them on what ICANN does and how to maybe be more involved in ICANN's work.

Of course, one of the things worth mentioning that we do at ICANN at the moment, is that we are doing some kind of vertical integration within our teams in a sense that we actually have a dedicated track at the moment for civil society engagement. We have a dedicated track for business engagement, and another dedicated track for technical and academic engagement.

Usually, when we engage with stakeholders, we work internally with our teams to see how we can actually take things to the next level with them. Of course, in most cases, we seek what they are interested in in terms of ICANN and what they'd like us

to do. Some people come to us and would like to partner with us on a certain event or maybe have a webinar or maybe a workshop. The options are endless. I wouldn't say that it's just limited to a certain thing.

One thing we like to see people doing in our outreach is that they maybe come and attend either our regional events or maybe ICANN meetings or maybe the IGF. Let's say I speak to somebody and that person is interested in Internet governance. So maybe we would encourage them to maybe attend the global IGF, maybe attend the Arab IGF. The options are endless.

Frankly speaking, internally, we actually have some tools in order to measure the success of how we are engaging with our stakeholders. This is actually in its initial stages, but what's important for us is that we have maybe more visibility and we get to know more people on the ground in countries. I'm not sure if I addressed your question.

HIBA ABBAS:

Let me make a specific example. Coming from Sudan, I know that you've been to Sudan in some of the workshops. I know that during workshops, people had some kind of talk and some kind of concerns regarding the ICANN and the US sanction and the IANA stewardship and other stuff.

So is there a formal channel where you channel these comments back to ICANN, or should we go? Because being in engagement and outreach, that means ICANN is present at our reach, and that may be an opportunity for people who are not able to attend or participate to get their feedback. Is that the right channel, or do we have to go through the other channels?

FAHD BATAYNEH:

The best way to actually do that is to go through your regional team. In the case of Sudan, you can actually talk to Baher and myself, and if there are any implications or issues, we run it internally through the organization. Even actually if you try to run it through other channels, they will send it back to us. We are the focal point of contact when it comes to these issues.

Let me be clear on one thing for both Baher and myself. Baher has been serving the region for the past ten years. I've been working with him for the past 2.5 years. For us, we understand that there are political implications. There is this whole concept of sanctions for some countries, but we really strive to ensure that all our stakeholders from all the countries in the region we cover actually receive the services we can provide to everybody on equal footing. Of course, we don't succeed always, but we try our best to do that.

BAHER ESMAT: I just want to note quickly that here in the room, we have Sally Costerton. Sally is my boss, and she's also a senior advisor to the ICANN president on global stakeholder engagement. Sally oversees all the work of global engagement in all regions, including the Middle East. Anything you ask for, she has to approve it, and she usually does. Thank you, Sally, for coming. Thank you. Question?

HASHIM NOUMAN: Hashim Nouman from Pakistan. My question is really simple. How do you maintain the balance in the community engagement in the region among the countries? Is it just how involved the community from the country wants to be, or do you try to maintain a balance?

BAHER ESMAT: Well, we strive to improve our outreach as we go, and it's a two-way thing, as I said at the outset. The more engagement we get from the communities, the more work we can do with them.

The big example here is Pakistan. Pakistan actually sort of enforced us to do more in Pakistan. Fahd has been to Pakistan three times in the past six months. The summer school in Ig

came from the community. The PKNOC, even though, it's not an ICANN initiative, it's ISOC, APNIC, and ICANN was participating. All these things came from you guys, so it's two way.

We certainly try to keep the balance. We try to work with everyone, and we do work with everyone, but the amount of work we do varies from one country to another depending on the kind of engagement we see from countries and communities. Salam.

SALAM YAMOUT:

Thank you, Baher. Salam Yamout with RIPE NCC. I also wanted to say that we have the Middle East Network Operators Group. We're trying to grow the technical community in the region, and we have two meetings a year. They are partly sponsored by RIPE and cc but also by ICANN, ISOC, and the others. The next MENOC will be in Istanbul 23 and 24 of March.

For us, the Middle East region goes all the way from Pakistan, I guess, to Morocco, right? There is no reason not to come together as a group and get to know each other more. All three organizations also have fellowship for all of you to be able to attend if you'd like to.

The last thing I want to talk about is something called RACI that RIPE is starting. They already had this program for academic

cooperation where people would present a good idea, a good project, some kind of research, some kind of innovation, and they will get a prize that is to go to the RIPE meeting where it is attended by 800 people from all the RIPE regions, which is Russia, Europe, Eastern Europe, and Middle East. It's a good opportunity for the inventor or the innovators or the researchers to show their invention to the rest of the world. We are working on it to also put some kind of cash grant with it. So please, if you or somebody you know has innovation or research or has link with academia, please present to the RACI.

What we have done in the RIPE is that the Middle East region is guaranteed one spot. The Eastern European region is also guaranteed one slot, and the others have to compete amongst each other. Please present. You'll be guaranteed a little bit of help to get to the next level. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Salam. Hamza.

HAMZA BEN MEHREZ: I have another question. I have been engaged in building grass root movements in the MENA region, so now we have, I think, one of the biggest grass root movements of policy analysts who work on the Internet. But those people, they are maybe human

rights activists. They come from a legal background, but they are not really technically savvy enough to try to work on and to embrace or understand the whole framework of Internet governance at its three layers.

How can we help you in that process of your ICANN outreach engagement and the [MENOG] vision, but at the same time, upgrade our own initial backgrounds to have more technical knowledge. That technical knowledge can be taught to us through different engagements and trainings and workshops that can benefit both parties.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: What is the name of your group?

HAMZA BEN MEHREZ: I work with the Hivos Foundation on the Internet Governance MENA [vision] program. We worked on a project called the Internet policy analyst, which is, with all modesty, very famous.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Chimps can train them in ATI.

HAMZA BEN MEHREZ: I'm talking about engaging with ICANN, but the center benefiting and benefiting both parties.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Thank you, Hamza. There are a couple of things I can mention in this regard.

Number one, there is a lot of discussion at the moment within ICANN to integrate human rights into the bylaws. So that's one thing you can contribute to and you can actually encourage your local community to be part of.

Number two, as I mentioned earlier, we have this vertical integration at ICANN. At the moment, we have an engagement with civil society, which is called civil society engagement. It's lead by my colleague, who's the vice-president of Europe, Jean-Jacques Sahel. Frankly speaking, we're still in the initial stages.

We have this global civil society engagement framework, which was actually shared with the community. We received feedback from the community, and we updated the community. There is another update actually here at ICANN 55 for civil society engagement.

Now, our next step is to actually customize this global civil society strategy at the regional level, and that's where we will

actually seek help and feedback from the regional community on what you'd like to see us doing for you.

HAMZA BEN MEHREZ:

Can I add something? For example, for human rights advocates or for someone coming from a legal background, if he confronts a technical background, he does not have a solution for that. I think it's better to have advocates at the MENA region can approach like one legal problem or human rights problem from a technical perspective, so they can have dual backgrounds.

I think ICANN can help us in this with training human rights advocates and grass root people to be technically savvy enough, to have their own tools while confronting problems of censorship or surveillance or any problems that can confront them in the future in terms of contents on the Internet and in terms of human rights. So you have a technical mission here.

Of course, we will help you in that outreach strategy, as well. Does that make sense?

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Let me be clear on one thing. ICANN's mandate is very limited. Now, when you talk about surveillance and circumvention, that really goes out of our mandate.

But then, we can maybe get you in touch with the right experts who can actually maybe help you on that. We can take this discussion offline. Shabbir.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you, Fahd and Baher. Actually, your candid remarks and answers force me to ask another question, which is very close to my topic of interest.

As a student of international relations, I take interest in international happenings and how it impacts the Internet, as well, so I would like to hear your opinion and your ideas and how do you feel about this US/Iran nuclear deal? Because after this nuclear deal is materialized and sanctions are lifted, there will be a lot of business coming in and outside of Iran. What potential do you see in Iran, and how do you see it flourishing there? Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you for the question. Well, the potential we see in Iran is massive just to say the least. We've been to Iran – Fahd and myself – last year at a couple of events. We met with stakeholders from governments, non-governments, and business companies, and we have many requests for engagement in Iran and with the Iranian community. Of course,

politics sometimes play against our wishes. I hope, like others, that with the recent development on the US/Iran deal front, things will improve and our engagement with Iran will become easier.

Right now, it's not that easy. We do have relationships with many stakeholders in Iran. They come to ICANN meetings; people from the government at the higher level, people from private sector, and they are here actually in Marrakech, as well. But it's like Pakistan. They demand ICANN to do more, and sometimes our outreach to them is a bit limited.

But I hope that this will improve.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: So do you have any specific upcoming plans?

BAHER ESMAT: Specific plans, no. We do have a couple of projects that are currently in the works with them, but they're not finalized yet, so I'm not able to announce them. This is part of the challenge. They're taking time because of the political challenge. But we're working with them very, very closely.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Naveed.

NAVEED BIN RAIS: I might have missed this information, but just wanted to know if there's a consensus on this strategy of Middle East that is due to expire in June? Is there a consensus on the continuation or the update of the strategy post-June 2016? Thanks.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Naveed, for bringing us back to the agenda. Certainly, I wouldn't say that we have had enough feedback from this discussion, though it was very useful in terms of feedback and suggestions on the way forward.

Based on feedback on this specific question on the continuation of the working group and which format and so forth, based on feedback that we have gotten over e-mail in the past couple of weeks from you as well as others, all the comments that we got were in favor of continuing the strategy, continuing some sort of working group. There is no consensus on what kind of working group – open, closed, large, small – no consensus yet on that particular point, so we will continue discussion with you guys, if

not here in Marrakech, online, or maybe via webinar or conference calls over the next couple of weeks.

Also, I think the feedback that we got via e-mail was not sent to everybody. What I'm going to do, with the permission of people who provided this feedback, I'm going to share this with a wider group over mailing lists and so forth. I'm going to do this, but I need to seek their permission first, but I'm going to do this.

Nadira was one of them, so Nadira gave her permission. Naveed was another one. Yeah, I'll reach out to the rest of those people who provided feedback, and we'll circulate their feedback to the larger group. That's easy.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

I'd like to just add one more point. What's for sure is that the region wants this to continue. What we are still figuring out is should we do it as a working group or should we do it as an ad-hoc open group? That's the main question at the moment for us.

NAVEED BIN RAIS:

Just to follow up on that, my point is that you had a strategy for two or three years, so before doing a review of that study, it is difficult to decide whether you are going to continue with that or you really or seriously need an update on that.

What I would propose is to have an interim, small party or whatever set of volunteers that study all the development. That may not be the ICANN staff but the community members who might do a consensus on what they want, whether there's a serious review of this where that is required or with small modification I'm sure. Some modifications to that strategy is certainly required, but small or major revisions, you can continue on that.

SALAM YAMOUT:

One question for him. Do you want an assessment of the current strategy? Because it's different from a review. An assessment is what has been good, what has not been good, and what to do in the next steps.

NAVEED BIN RAIS:

In terms of the data, we have that we some initiatives and set up and we can see the result. But what I would like to have is to have a team that reviews that document to see what was achieved and what was not achieved. We have numbers.

SALAM YAMOUT:

That's an assessment.

NAVEED BIN RAIS: Yeah, maybe. You can put it that way. We have numbers of what was done, but we don't have information of what could not be done or was not done, right, so this is important to go forward. Thanks.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Having an evaluation is mandatory. I don't think we can do anything more if we do not make this evaluation. But there are still two issues to be dealt with, the first one being the format. Are we going to continue with the same working format? One. And second, according to what is happening now in ICANN, what is happening in the Internet environment? What are going to be the main action lines that may be pre-identified prior to continuing with the group? Or even the evaluation should take into consideration what's going on. What's going on?

FAHD BATAYNEH: Naveed, in terms of assessing this entire strategy, once June 30th comes, we will report to the regional community on what we have done.

Just a couple of weeks before we flew into Marrakech, both Baher and myself actually worked on a document listing all the main activities and sub-activities and what we have done. Actually, I have the document right in front of me, but it's not for

public consumption at this stage. We actually reflected this in our slides more or less, but this is more detailed. We will share this information with the group.

BAHER ESMAT:

I think to this very point, what we can do, based on Naveed's comment or suggestion, is that from the document that Fahd and myself are working on, which will evolve into the final report on the three year, what we can do as an action item from this discussion is to provide this document as a draft document to the group and have deliberation on this draft report because it will be missing a couple of activities that will take place over the next couple of months, so it's no big deal. The draft report can be made available.

Then the one thing we have to figure out – we can put it for the entire community to provide feedback, but then your suggestion is to have a smaller review group of some sort. I'm not clear on this point, but making the draft report available for the public is something we can certainly do.

NAVEED BIN RAIS:

I agree to that. That's why I didn't say that it has to be the community. ICANN staff can do that themselves.

You would still mention the achievements and all that, and this is what a report is all about, but if there's a self-assessment that you can provide in that report of what could not be achieved and these are the reasons that it was not achieved, then the community would be in a better position to comment on that and to suggest the way forward for the betterment of the region and the strategy.

This is what my point is. It can be done by the community members or by the staff.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Let me tell you one thing. In our assessment, we concluded, I think, we had something like somewhere around 30 sub-activities to work on. There were two or three sub-activities that we didn't work on. One was IPv6 training, and that is the work actually of the regional Internet registries.

When we spoke to the regional Internet registries, they said, "We will handle this," so ICANN didn't work on it directly. We worked on in indirectly with our partners.

There was another set of trainings on registry operations, and when we spoke to the regional community, they felt that they didn't want it. They wanted more of DNSSEC.

So at one stage, we organized this workshop in 2014 in Amman, and we were supposed to do one of these registry operation courses, and then we received a request saying, “No. We want something on DNSSEC,” and we actually realized from them that there was more demand for stuff like DNS operations and DNSSEC versus these registry operations courses. So we didn't implement that.

But other than that, everything in the strategy was actually implemented, and we added on that more, such as dedicated business engagement and to some extent civil society engagement.

BAHER ESMAT:

Let me also add quickly that, not only what activities have or have not been implemented, we've also faced some challenges measuring the progress. Some of the metrics that were suggested in the strategy document three years ago we found it very difficult to measure or touch, if you see what I mean.

We're going to provide all this information in this draft report for your review and feedback, and then we'll take the next steps from there. So that's no problem. Please?

FAHD BATAYNEH:

One quick comment. On the question [inaudible] asked on whether we still need a working group , or do we do it ad-hoc, actually, this is what we are seeking from you in this session. We want this to be answered by you. We don't want to make the decision, so you tell us what you want.

One that I can share with you is a really quick brief on how this initial strategy came out. We had a working group of 22 people from 10 countries. They worked on the strategy document. They identified what were the strategic goals and what ICANN's engagement should be within the region.

Then from that document, they agreed that we would implement this strategy as an implementation plan for the next three years.

Now, once we started implementing the implementation plans, the Middle East Strategy Working Group started fading in its interaction with us. They said, "Okay, we developed the strategy for you. We told you what to implement. You go and do it." Actually, what we do at the moment is that we report back to the Middle East Strategy Working Group every three months on the progress of the implementation plan of that year.

Ali, for example, is a member of the Middle East Strategy Working Group. The last time the group met was in February

2014 because after that, all of us were in agreement that we didn't need anything else to do. So, okay, ICANN is implementing, ICANN is reporting to us once every three months, and we are good.

That's the question we want to ask you all. Should we move in the same pace, or do we really need another strategy working group that can actually add to what the current strategy has or maybe implement something else?

As I mentioned to you earlier, for both Baher and myself, it wasn't just about the findings of the strategy. We actually factored in several other things. We have been engaging extensively with law enforcement agencies and certs. As I said, there is the civil society engagement. There is this business engagement in a more dedicated manner within ICANN.

This is the question we are asking you all. How do we move forward? Hiba?

HIBA ABBAS:

I don't know if it's time for this or something, but I have, based on the things about assessment, a suggestion. Part of the problem that we have in the Middle East MENA region, we don't actually know as countries where we stand in terms of, let's say, DNS operation and DNSSEC.

For example, I know that our ccTLD is not signed yet. I don't know why, but I think having something like comparative – I don't know – studies among all the countries showing that in terms of operation exactly and in statistics how we stand and what could be the way forward or best practices might help the local communities to push for an optimum result.

As far as your question about the working group, I think opening the assessment for the public, having some feedback, and then channeling it through another working group would be better than continuing. I think, after three years, you need to have a check point to revise and make sure that the intended impact has actually happened because it might not be happening. So you might need some kind of changes in the strategy or in the activities itself. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT:

Just quickly on your first point about comparative studies among ccTLDs, the DNS market study that was conducted by EURid will be presented tomorrow. There is an appendix in the report that provides detailed information coming directly from ccTLDs.

Now, the question, of course, of whether all ccTLDs accepted to provide this information or not, I'm not sure. I'm not sure which countries are or are not listed in this report.

One thing you have to be mindful of is any information coming from ccTLDs, they have to provide it. Many of the ccTLDs, even the root zone file or something, they're not usually for ccTLDs. This is not public information. They have to make it available, and then they also have to approve that this information is published somewhere.

But anyway, the report has details about – probably not all – but many ccTLDs from the Middle East. There was another question here?

HIBA ABBAS:

If I can just make a follow up comment. I mentioned ccTLD as an example, but I know that in terms of goals, the engagement team is wanting to get more community from the region to ICANN.

The same thing that is happening with the ccTLD could happen for the At-Large maybe and other stuff.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I would like to speak in the Arabic language. For the society here, the strategic work is really the core of the issue, and it would decide the work moving forward. I have two comments.

First, the methodology. As you guys prepare a draft, do the opposite. In other words, it's suggestions to the general, and then you draft the language afterwards, or you can mix both together. Apparently, that's where you're heading, or you're going to wait. That is for the methodology part.

For the practical part, to guarantee the success, the facts on the ground have to be decided. There is a shortage in areas where ICANN is present, so the work today is ample, paramount work expected, whether we talk about the Internet community as a whole. We have to first decide on the objectives for the next three years. There's a short-term, mid-term, and long-term objectives. After deciding on the objectives, you have to tackle the mechanisms according to the type of objectives. If you ask me about the mechanisms, have complete openness when we talk about the Internet community, whether we talk about openness with organizations, associations, whether governmental or non-governmental.

In addition to that, all other parties – so this what we can call a mechanism of openness. We will achieve many objectives. This is one point.

The second point is the follow up policy. We can have a wonderful, a marvelous strategy, yet, we cannot secure the success of any strategy without being followed up. Thank you very much.

NAVEED BIN RAIS: If you can just summarize what was being asked because it was too fast to be translated I guess.

BAHER ESMAT: The [inaudible] two-fold. One was about how we're going to structure ourselves around this work – methodology. Are we going to provide draft document for feedback? Are we going to call on the community to provide input, and then we consolidate? Are we going to do something in the middle? That was the first part.

The second part was about developing. Any strategy requires determining objectives, and then afterwards, follow up on implementation and assessing what has been accomplished and so forth. This is a nutshell the intervention.

Allow me to try to answer quickly in Arabic since the intervention was in Arabic. I'll try to do it briefly and slowly.

In regards to the methodology, we agreed on presenting the draft as you mentioned, and this draft will give a summary on what has been achieved and what was not achieved when it comes to the three-year strategy. We will also collect feedback from the larger community in regards to this draft. God willing before next June, we will have a final report on the strategy. This is about the first point.

In terms of the second point, I agree with you 100%. Any strategy has to have a set of goals. This is exactly what we did for this current strategy three years ago. We had a specific set of objectives and action items, as well and accurate metrics, as well.

How are we going to assess also? How are we going to measure the achievement of each action item?

Today, we will report all this and to review the current strategy, so we can agree on how we're going to update this strategy. So the action items as well might be out dated at this point. This is all what we agreed upon.

But what did we not agree upon so far as well, especially when we're going to work on the next strategy, whether it's going to be a one or two or three-year strategy? Shall we create a working group for that? Should it be an open group? Should it be

a closed working group? We're going to have to discuss this, and we still have time.

As I mentioned earlier, through the feedback we received through your e-mails, we heard that there is a request to have a role of the community as a whole for the coming strategy, as well. How is the format of the working? Again, close, open? These are details, and I think we will be able to agree on those details in the next two, three weeks by receiving the e-mails.

Our regional mailing list: Fahd can provide you with the link to get yourself subscribed on the list and get all the updates and engage in all the discussions about anything related to ICANN in the Middle East.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [inaudible]

BAHER ESMAT: I will not be able to give my personal opinion. I don't talk about the working group. I'm talking about the mechanisms here. We have a mechanism that we employed three years ago. It had more advantages than disadvantages.

On the other hand, one of the disadvantages was the group that was in charge of the strategy was asked to oversee the

implementation, and as Fahd said, they would not receive any complete outcome review from them at the end of the day.

Yet, the mechanism was simple. The working group worked on a strategy. It was submitted to the ICANN team, and it's an annual implementation plan. Every three months of this one year, we review it and see what was accomplished. The mechanism for the next period we did not agree upon yet. Due to the limited time we have for this session, I will not be able to go into details. But we will continue our discussion after we walk out of this room.

NAVEED BIN RAIS:

I just want to have a last comment on this. I don't see a strong reason of continuing the strategy as it is now. I'm saying this because I see the previous strategy as a successful one.

Once you are successful in doing that, you know that your targeted audience would be at a next level. So in order to address them at the next level, you need a fresh or an updated or a better strategy.

It's just like teaching students in the class. When they pass one year, you need to provide them at a higher level for the next class. That's my point of view, so that's why I need a reason to have a fresh or an updated strategy. Thanks.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you, Naveed. Well noted, and thank you for your input.

I think on that note, I'd like to thank you all for coming and for staying toward the end of this session. It was very useful for us as the ICANN team. We thank you for this. We thank you for your continued engagement with us, and we look forward to continuing the work with you on phase two of the Middle East strategy.

As I said, we're going to continue communication via e-mail, and we will certainly have some sort of conference call or webinar set probably in the next couple of weeks. Thank you again, and enjoy the rest of the week in Marrakech. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]