
HELSINKI – At-Large Technology Taskforce
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ARIEL LIANG: Hello, this is Ariel Liang. Is that Corinna or Mark on the bridge? If so, can you just say something and we can confirm you're connected.

MARK SEGAL: Yes, Mark is here.

CORINNA ACE: Corinna's here.

ARIEL LIANG: Thank you so much. Welcome.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Okay, good morning, and good afternoon and good evening for any of the – after the echo goes. There wasn't two of me.

This is the Dev Anand Teelucksingh, Chair of the At-Large Technology Taskforce. Welcome to our At-Large Technology Taskforce session at ICANN 56 Helsinki. We managed to squeeze

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

in some short time early in the morning here in Helsinki, but we do have a packed agenda and actually from some very interesting items to show and discuss.

So let's us go right to our slides. And just to give a brief background as to the At-Large Technology Taskforce –

Next slide. Next. Next slide. And next slide.

Right. So just to give a background behind what the At-Large Technology Taskforce does, we review Information and Communication Technologies that helps At-Large better able to accomplish their role in ICANN activities. It's open to anyone that's interested in ICT and how they can be applied to solve the needs of the At-Large and other ICANN communities.

Next slide.

And the next slide just simply shows some of our links here. We meet mostly once a month. Sometimes we have two calls a month, and we have a wiki space and a workspace where we document all of our activities. And if, again, anyone wanting to join can e-mail At-Large Staff.

Next slide.

So we have an update on Technology issues. So for those attending, we have a Technology Issues wiki page. And what we

do is seek to track possible technology related issues and for raising with ICANN staff. We're just going to focus on two issues that we see some significant updates since ICANN 55 in Marrakech. And that's making Adobe Connect recordings more accessible by having those recordings available in MP4 format. And our LACRALO mailing list issues. Judith?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Yes. This is Judith Hellerstein, also a co-Chair of the Technology Taskforce. And we'll also be talking about hopefully some improvements to Adobe Connect that will enable it to be better used by people who are on mobile devices, which has been a lot of problems for our community is that they can't see certain functions that we use on Adobe on mobile devices. So hopefully we'll get an update on that as well.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, Judith. Okay, so let's move to the next slide.

Just to give some background behind Adobe Connect recordings. Adobe Connect is the conferencing solution used by ICANN and all of the ACs and SOs, for all of the face-to-face sessions, for remote participation, and all of the working group calls. And while you could record the entire session of Adobe Connect, one key problem is that it requires Adobe Flash to play

back those videos. And for those on mobile devices, they simply cannot have access to those recordings. And also, even if you have a PC with adobe Flash installed, the experience of playing back Adobe Connect recordings is very cumbersome. It's almost like you have to download the entire video which is sometimes like 200 MB. So if you don't have a fast enough connection, you have to wait half a minute sometimes and then you're able to start playing back. And then jumping ahead sometimes also very – a lot of pauses. So there is that.

The third thing is that if you're trying to do outreach and engagement and telling people to install Adobe Flash, the Adobe Flash plug-in is, I would say it requires lots of updates. It's not very secure. There have been numerous security flaws, I'm sure literally dozens I think within the past year alone. And if you're not keeping up to date, your PC, Windows, or Mac is vulnerable to be hijacked by malware. So that's a big issue. Satish?

SATISH BABU:

Thank you, Dev. Now that Adobe Connect itself is based on Flash. So having Flash itself is not necessarily a big issue. The real issue is that Flash itself is kind of a dead end. For a sustainable kind of a future we can't depend on Flash. We might have to think of other options. Although I feel that this trouble is

actually temporary. It might get resolved. But what is the alternative to flash itself?

And also, people like us who are using Linux, you didn't mention it at all. So just pointing that out.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, Satish. Regarding using Linux, that has also been historically a challenge. Literally, the only workaround you have now is to use Google Chrome which has a built in Flash player. Because Adobe itself is not updating the Linux plug-in. So the Adobe Flash plug-in for Linux is no longer... you can't use it anymore to connect to Adobe Connect sessions and recordings. So that's really the only workaround.

And I agree with you. I think we're seeing, given the prevalence of mobile, we're seeing the use of Flash less and less. And there are two new technologies that we're looking at that's coming up that's available in many of the conferencing solutions we've been testing – HTML 5 and something called WebRTC, which is a [inaudible] to allow audio and video communication through your browser without a plug-in.

Josh, welcome. I see you enter the room.

So going back to the thing regarding Adobe Connect recordings, next slide.

So what we did was that, based on the suggestions given by the Technology Taskforce, ICANN has configured their Adobe Connect accounts to allow for the ICANN staff to export the Adobe Connect recordings to MP4 format. So the MP4 format is playable on mobile devices. And what was currently ongoing right now is for staff to test the process to convert Adobe Connect recordings to MP4, that's one, and to upload to video sharing sites such as YouTube. And we have done one such recording and the link is there in the presentation.

So I guess what I'd like to do is perhaps ask staff for an update. I think one of the challenges was that the MP4 recording worked well as a stand-alone file, but uploading an MP4 file to YouTube was a challenge.

ARIEL LIANG:

In terms of the challenge when we upload the MP4 file, is that the length of the video just doubled itself without any prewarning and now we have to manually cut the video into half so that it's the original length. And if Josh or anybody else can give some insights that would be really helpful.

JOSHUA BAULCH: My name is Josh Baulch. I'm with ICANN staff. I manage the Meetings Technical Team. I actually have a couple of updates that I think you guys will all be very pleased with.

The first one is actually probably the biggest announcement. The issues with Adobe Connect have not fallen on deaf ears from our standpoint, and we have seen it within our own meetings within ICANN. So what we had been working with is a company called Connect Solutions. The way Adobe works is you either have an adobe hosted, which is directly with Adobe, or you can actually have the platform hosted with a different company but you have control over the servers. The cost difference in doing that is actually pretty significant, but we had enough issues that I felt that it was worthwhile to do so.

As of Wednesday, the Executive Team approved moving forward. So as of September we actually will be migrating over to our own server cluster so we're not sharing it with anybody else. This will help us also solve a lot of the other issues that you guys have, because when we were on Adobe hosted, we actually don't have control of the servers. We're on a cluster with everybody else so we get the standard package that everybody else gets.

So in this case, we will be able to customize things, so we'll be able to customize pods. So one of the top priorities that I have is

the chat pod being able to do multiple languages, being able to do multiple languages within the captioning, so there's a lot of things that we're able to do. Now it's not going to be immediate because it's going to take us a little time to get everything up and going.

So the one impact that it will have on the community is that we have to change our subdomain. So right now we all go to icann.adobeconnect.com. So after lengthy discussion internally, we will be going to participate.icann.org. And the reason that we decided to do away with referencing Adobe is because any time down the future if we decide to go to a different platform we don't want to be beholden to the name. So we decided to make it something that's generic so that we can just transfer that subdomain to something else and move on.

A couple of things to address directly with the Flash issue. I did a conference call with Adobe directly, and because this is a really big issue for a lot of customers not just us. So Adobe actually has 40 million customers. Of that, 63% are Windows, 24% is other – I don't know how they classify that – 11% is Apple, 1.3% is Chrome Operating System, and then less than .5% is Linux users. Now you know why they don't help us much.

What their future plan is – and we're hoping within the year to resolve this issue – but what their plan is, so the Adobe add-in –

and if you guys don't use the Adobe add-in, I really encourage you to use it because it is not Flash-based – so what they're going to do is they're going to make the webpage so when you load it, it will try to load Flash automatically. But if your browser has flash blocked or if you have chose to not have Flash, then it will roll to the next thing. It'll try to get your add-in. If your add-in doesn't load, then it will load HTML 5.

I saw a demo of it. It is, the experience for the user, is significantly different on HTML 5. The Adobe room looks different. It still has the same layout, but it is I would say a cleaner look. You still have close to the same functionality on it.

So from that standpoint, that's a positive. We do have the option from ICANN's perspective, that we can actually force the add-in to be used by everybody. We have not chose to do this because I have a little bit of a problem with in the standpoint of, if somebody is an Apple user and they want to monitor more than one Adobe room, it doesn't launch more than one application. So you can only watch one room. So if I turn that feature on, it just blocks and says you can't do it. So it will not play in a web browser from that perspective. So it's something that I don't really feel comfortable with doing.

I have talked to them about that. They recognize that is a problem, so they are trying to address that for the Apple users to be able to launch multiple rooms.

One other positive note that staff will probably more appreciate is when we migrate over to the hosted solution with Connect Solutions, that we will be able to have a monitoring tool that a staff member – so like a Technical Support person – can monitor 30 Rooms at once. You’ll see in the chat pod you’ll see a little Technical Support tab that you can click on and say, “Hey, I’m having this problem in my Adobe room,” the Technical person can jump in, correct it, and then jump back out so that they can monitor multiple rooms. Right now we only have the option to physically watch each of the rooms and in most cases, you can’t really do more than two or three at a time.

Yes, so that’s kind of the high level of really where we’re going with Adobe, so I’m really pleased about that. That will happen within the next 60-90 days that we’ll be rolling that over. So as soon as we get back – most ICANN staff are not aware of this rollover just because it just happened – but because you guys have been so instrumental in helping us get this far, this is something that I felt you guys needed to know.

DEVANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks for that, Josh. I think I have to say very positive steps, especially with the custom pods. Because I think especially things if you have chat that can do translation and so forth, those are big steps. I think I see... Okay, Judith?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Thanks, Josh, for this great update. So I guess the question is, what you're saying is from what we have here who do translation, right now they have to call in through the Adigo line. So is that what you're saying, is that we could then... Is the audio only that or...?

JOSHUA BAULCH: So there's a couple of things. So with the transcript, that still requires a live person. So there's still going to have to be somebody on the line for that. But the language translation – basically they're utilizing Google Translate – so then on that transcript you can select which language you want.

Now the interesting thing about that when we talked about that – the company that developed it is called eSync – when they develop it, it's not word for word translation. It is actually phrase. So there may be a slight lag in what you're seeing because it's actually taking the phrase that's in English and then translating it. Because word for word translation doesn't get you

anywhere. You get things that aren't comprehensible necessarily.

The question about listening to the different languages, that is something that I brought up. They do not have an immediate solution to it right now, but it is something that they'll work with us on and try to help resolve.

One of the other things that will be a big improvement is we can actually do peering sessions with the phone providers directly, which will significantly help the audio quality. Because right now when you do a phone call it's routing through who knows where. So this way we have three providers and we'll be able to do peering session with at least two of those providers. Verizon will be the only one that we probably won't be able to do a peering session with.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN:

So clarification, so that means the people who call in... Because I think what we have right now when we have our language service, we have our own translation, I guess this would be mostly on the RALO calls where we have French and Spanish translation. So they have the interpreters like they are next door. People call in because we have to set the Adobe audio to only one thing. So would we be able then to split the audio – that's one question – split the audio in that.

And the other thing is you said the pods. So if in the future when we're expanding our captioning, we could have different pods in different languages. We could have one pod for the English and one pod for Spanish to load on it. But they could also be the same text streams.

JOSHUA BAULCH: So one, to address the last question – no, it would actually still be one pod. You would select what language you want to read it in. So just to save on space.

And sorry, you have to remind me on your first question.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: The first question was, currently the process is people call in on Adigo because the audio is selected by the Adobe.

JOSHUA BAULCH: Right. And this is a question that I've asked the company. Right now there is not a solution to that so that within Adobe you can pick what language you want to listen to. Right now that's not an option. But they did not say that it was not possible to not be able to do it. It's not something, like I said, we have a list of things we need to get through first but it is still on the list. But I think that we will be able to address that.

And part of this, too, I need to say is that all of the customization does cost money. So part of that will be making sure that we can get the money to be able to do the additional features.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Okay. Thanks, Josh. That is very interesting news and perhaps we could take that discussion to our TTF mailing list, because I think there's other question we could probably ask on it.

I see there's a queue. Okay. Past three persons. Keep the interventions short. We do have a packed agenda. Satish?

SATISH BABU:

I'm very happy to hear about the developments on Adobe Connect. I would like to point out also that when you look at the intermediate maybe three years and later, HTML 5 becomes a very strong contender because of the fact that it is not dependent on any third party plug-in module [inaudible]. And when you travel we can be in any cyber café without any reservations that they must have the plug-in and so on. So it really liberates us if you focus on HTML 5 for the future. Thank you.

JOSHUA BAULCH: Just follow up on that. Adobe is dragging their feet about it. I'm not going to lie about that. Flash is their product. They know that it's on its death bed. The one thing that I will say that they state is that their HTML 5 is still problematic because HTML 5 does not address video natively. There actually are APIs that they have to install – webRTC – to get process... so they are fighting a little bit of that because they aren't able to do what they can with video quality that they can with flash. They're kind of dragging their feet on that because HTML 5 has not been fully embraced by everybody yet, and so they're still kind of waiting. But they are moving forward with it. The add-in is not Flash anymore. The mobile is not Flash so they had to move forward with it anyway.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Okay, thanks. Olivier?

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND: Yes, thank you very much, Dev. You said there were several providers for dial in and call out and so on. I knew that there was a time when there was some kind of a policy to move people from Adobe and Verizon to the system which worked directly with Adobe Connect where you would issue yourself a dial out on Adobe Connect. Was any thought given about people that were not going to be on Adobe Connect and needed a dial out,

because I've noticed in some cases you need to either get a friend of yours or someone to be in front of a computer or some kind of a tablet to get the dial out done and when it drops, sometimes it's also difficult.

JOSHUA BAULCH:

No, I appreciate the question. And it was addressed in the initial thought process behind that. Really where we thought that that would work was whoever's managing the room, because they can do dial outs to people within the room. However, what wasn't really taken into consideration is a lot of time those staff are tied up with other things and they're not able to do it.

And I've also experienced, too, like when we were in Tunisia we have a hard time getting Tijani connected because when you're going through various phone providers sometimes they just don't respect dial outs because a lot of times they'll block them because they think they're auto-robo-calls or whatever.

So we have not pushed as hard to get everybody over. Really it came down to a massive cost difference in cost. So ICANN, right now, we spend about \$1.5 million in conferencing – just in calls alone, nothing else other than that. We spend about \$800,000 of that on Verizon. Verizon is our most costly customer. Adigo would be second. But we have chose to keep all of the groups that do a lot of languages – interpreted calls – on Adigo because

of the customer service that they provide. And we have renegotiated that contract to try to help get it more in comparable with the other providers.

Interestingly enough, Adigo actually offers the same thing that PGI does, that does the auto dial outs. We haven't pushed it in any of the groups but it is available. The reason that we haven't pushed it is because it has to be a different set of dial in numbers, and right now I don't want to muddy the waters with that.

But it is something available and maybe when we switch over to the new platform with Adobe, that it might be something we can encourage some groups to use. Because then in that case then you have the best of both worlds. We have the auto dial outs. But you can also have an operator join your call as well.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Okay. Thanks, Josh. I do know we have other items on the agenda. I know, Seun, is there something – is it a very quick intervention, or can it wait? Thanks. James? Okay, thanks. Let's move ahead to the next point regarding the LACRALO mailing list.

The problems of the LACRALO mailing list has been well documented at that link. We've submitted a budget proposal to

fix the bugs in the ICANN’s machine translation tool used for the LACRALO mailing list for FY17, and it was taken as not a priority with the new ICANN staff coming on board, Mark Segal and Corinna Ace, the Product Manager who are now treating the issue more formally. I believe what has happened is that a call has gone out for a developer to help fix the remaining bugs. I don’t know if Mark or Corinna could give update on that?

MARK SEGAL:

Yes, we’re still looking for that developer. We’ve had a little bit more success in getting some candidates at least over the last couple weeks. We were really narrowing our search for a while there and weren’t getting a lot of candidates popping up. So we’ve since changed what we’re looking for and we’re starting to get a lot of candidates to come in. And once Helsinki is through, we’re going to go through another round of interviews and hopefully we’re going to get somebody here in the next couple weeks.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Okay. Thanks, Mark. And again, I think we look forward – and the whole LACRALO community – looks forward to seeing somebody getting hired to push this and fix this longstanding problem.

Okay, seeing no updates we can then move on to our next slide and our next update.

And this is something regarding the at-Large website metrics. I believe this is something Corinna will be speaking about? So Corinna, could you take the floor?

CORINNA ACE:

Hi, yes. This is Corinna Ace. That's correct. Ariel, is the slide up, going to be shared? Okay. Upload's in progress.

Thank you, Dev. Thanks for your introduction and everyone for having me at the Technology Taskforce Meeting today. I'm Corinna. I'm part of the Product Management Team at ICANN. I've had the opportunity to support on recent updates to the At-Large site. It's been a great experience, but I'm joining you today as Dev said because another part of my role at ICANN is focused on website analytics.

So with that, I'd like to show you just a one page slide of basically some recent activity on the At-Large site – specifically in the four months after the new site launch – how that looks compared to measurements from the same time last year.

And so I'll note that a couple of the recent numbers – mainly through the page views – are inflated due to increased traffic

right after the launch. But even with this in mind, overall data shows a really positive trend and improvement in use of the site.

So taking a look at the first metric, we have sessions – so the number of times users are actively engaged with the site over a time period. The number of sessions on at-Large has increased about 84% year over year. That’s a noticeable uptick in site activity.

Visitors – the number of users who initiate at least one session within the state range – has also increased by about 22%. So during this timeframe last year there were about 2,500 users who initiated a session compared to over 3,100 in the timeframe this year.

Our page views have increased significantly. But as I mentioned, this is also the data most inflated by our launch traffic. In fact, page views in the first week after the launch account for about 40% of all the page views I collected data on during this timeframe. So that’s declined and after activity died down a little bit and leveled out. And so isolating the most recent data shows that the average page views now is steadily about double the monthly average views as the same time last year.

So this is still a really good early indication of moving traffic away from the wiki and over to the new site, and it’s a metric we’ll continue to track as time goes on.

Our visit duration which is the average length of sessions across the timeframe has more than doubled from year over year. So it was a little under three minutes last year and it's shown as a little over six minutes this year. So this is a noteworthy increase of engagement, suggests that more users are finding parts of the site relevant and spending a longer time engaging with and accessing information.

And the pages per visit – this is another engagement indicator – and the average number of pages viewed during this time has also increased, almost double. It went from around 2.7 pages to 5.3 pages this year. So it's a good sign to see that users are visiting on average almost twice as many pages per session recently.

And our bounce rate – the percentage of single page visits- has decreased by 16%. So the timeframe last year our average was around 62% compared to around 52% this year. So the decline in percentage of visits that bounce is another good trend in performance and engagement.

And then just some more recent looks at audience and top viewed content – this, our breakdown of users is about 45% new, about 55% returning. And in the same timeframe in 2015 we had a somewhat higher percentage of new users. So this is

something to still track, but recent data may suggest that we're retaining more first time visitors than in the past.

And then the language chart here is based on the browsers that are used to access the site. So the primary language [received] English, but we do see some traffic from browsers set to each of these languages shown here, if that's not too small – English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Portuguese.

And then just to look at our recently top viewed page – next to the home page which was the majority of the views in this list, not too far behind is our Policy News pages, ALS lists and RALO lists, the ALAC page, and pages with – I thought it was positive to see – pages with information about getting involved and joining the community.

So again, this is just a kind of brief overview summary of how the site is doing and I think we have some pretty positive results here, some good trends and improved engagement overall. And I think it will be really interesting to continue tracking these metrics on the site and see how we fare over time.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, Corinna. One question I might just ask about is, are you tracking how many people are accessing us on mobile devices versus desktops?

CORINNA ACE: That is something that we can track. I did not include that here, but I can actually get that information for you specifically and follow up with you.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Okay, thanks. I think one thing we want to find out is how many people are using their mobile device to follow the activities of At-Large versus regular desktops. And given the increasing use of mobile devices I think it's more important for mobile users to be able to follow our activities and participate in our activities.

Any questions? Go ahead and please introduce yourself.

MIKHAIL MEDRISH: Thank you. Mikhail Medrish, EURALO. I suppose it's interesting to understand if it is possible to know the percentage in between regions of the world from where the users are going to our site. Thank you.

CORINNA ACE: I agree and that is something else we can look into is the locations, percentage breakdown by region. Which again, great feedback and it's something we didn't get here but I make note of that and it's something to follow up on. Thank you.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, Corinna. Thanks and an excellent suggestion. Okay, thank you, Corinna, for this. And let's move on to our next item on our agenda.

Next slide. Okay we're loading back the slides from the previous session. Right.

And this is now something, an update, on one of the recommendations from ATLAS II. Just a quick summary of what ATLAS II was. It was a list of recommendations the At-Large community gave to us about a year and a half ago, and one of the recommendations was Recommendation #31 that ICANN and the ALAC should investigate the use of simple tools and methods to facilitate participation in public comments and the use of crowdsourcing.

So we have looked at a few of those tools over the past year. We looked at Lumio and KAVI and we have recordings on our TTF workspace on that, and we found both of those tools lacking. And one of the things that we are going to be looking at is a tool such as group chat, applications such as Slack. And what we've heard is the NCUC have been actually trialing a chat solution that has some group chat features. And we are very lucky to have James Gannon and Rafik Dammak from the NCUC to help speak about the group chat application.

James, Rafik, welcome. Perhaps you could take the floor and just explain what you have done.

JAMES GANNON:

Thank you. Just waiting for my slides to come up. Excellent.

So probably about two or three months ago we decided that we really needed to have some form of real-time collaboration because at the end of the day, the technology is moving along and we went out and we started having a look at the various things in the marketplace and we'll see what we ended up coming up to for a number of different reasons.

The first thing we were looking at is for our members and I think would go for your members as well is how do we currently work together at ICANN? And we noticed that it's mostly through these mailing lists. And it looks boring and it doesn't look good. This is not a good way to work, really.

So we went out and we were like, "Well, how does the rest of the world actually work? " And it's using stuff like this – people use Snapchat and WhatsApp and Kick and Twitter. But we were looking at these and going, "Okay, but our discussions are generally a little bit more structured than that." So the obviously one that you come to is Slack. It's one of the most popular things are structured team-based discussions.

But the thing is, Slack costs a bit. And you can see, depending on what you need from Slack, it's up to \$12.50 per user. So we worked out, we looked at our figures, and who is active and who is not. And we thought, probably somewhere around maybe 100 active users a month. So at \$12.50 per person that's \$1,250 a month. We ain't that rich.

This is Slack, and this is what Slack looks like. So this is what we would get for our \$1,250 a month. What if I said that we can take that \$1,250 and put a decimal place in it? This is RocketChat which is an open source version of Slack. And all-in including hosting and everything else, this costs around \$12.50 per month for 100 users, not per person. And just going between these two, you can see how incredibly similar they are.

So it's an open source version of Slack. It's very, very, similar. And it does require a little bit of admin experience and you do need somebody there to manage it. And it's extremely low cost comparatively. We personally host it on a Cloud solution. We have it on Amazon Web Services. It has extremely strong security encryption features. And I'm extremely proud to be able to say it has an A+ rating on SSL Labs which is very, very, difficult to get.

Of particular interest to us, and I think to you guys as well, is that there no – well, provided that you don't host it in the U.S. – there is no export control so there is no OFAC impact. So we have no

issues with members from Sudan, Iran, or any other sanction bearing countries connecting to this. And that's something that you'd have seen with Adobe, it's something that you would see if you went with the Slack solution because they are a U.S. based company. They have to comply with OFAC. So yes, it seemed like a best case scenario. Even taking out the cost impact it just seemed like the most logical solution to us.

So the two biggest issues that we have found are, obviously being a very open group, there is no public archiving solution. And this is something that we need for our purposes, but also other companies that are looking to actually replace Slack and that work in compliance based environments such as financial services or healthcare also need this feature. So a couple of us who are using this solution have chipped in some money and we actually have a \$1,000 bounty for this feature to be added to RocketChat. So there's two devs actually working on this actively to try and get that bounty. So that is something that we will have very soon.

The internationalization support is there. The product can be done in multiple languages and the product can be done in multiple scripts. There is obviously no in-built translation or anything else but you can have chat rooms in various scripts and various languages, but I would still deem it as slightly immature. It's not very mature internationalization-wise, but that is again

something that is being actively developed on, so they're going in the right direction.

And for the more techie people, it uses Meteor – It's using Blaze on the frontend, the actual code is a [mix of] CoffeeScript from Java, and it runs on MongoDB – so it's really, really, modern technology. This is not basing itself on anything old school. And this is good because there's a lot of active development on it then, and we're not relying on people with some esoteric knowledge from many years ago. It's really active.

On the more infrastructure side, it has Sandstorm and Docker support. We are running it on Docker. There are native desktop apps. There are native mobile apps. There are native Linux apps. There are apps for pretty much any platform you can think of. And it supports voice and video chat you do using WebRTC. It supports person-to-person direct messaging using off-the-record messaging which is an extremely secure encrypted messaging, which is I feel very important. And there is an API.

There is support for chatbots which is a big feature of Slack. So you can automate a lot of things. You can add RSS feeds that a bot will go off and find out things about and then bring it back. And there you can use web hooks to hook into third party services that can then update your channel with various bits of information that you want it to do. And, as I said, there are

localizations for various languages. I think there is about 30 languages supported natively with more being actively developed.

So this is what our instance looks like. I had a conversation with Glenn and Dev that possibly a demo today is probably not the best idea, but what we can do is if you're interested I can come onto one of your Taskforce calls and we can do an actual, proper, full-on demo. But essentially if you know what Slack looks like, it looks like this. I've seen apart from maybe some of the third party plug-ins that Slack has, this essentially gives us exactly the same features for the cost of \$12.50 Euro a month. And I haven't seen anything that is pushing me back towards Slack.

For some reference, we launched about six to eight weeks ago. We have 50 active users – like, class active users, people that are using it multiple times a day. For the pilot phase we identified it as the primary chat tool for Helsinki. So we all know we have WhatsApps groups, we have Skype channels, we have all of this, but we said, “No, look. For Helsinki.” Number one, this is the new meeting format anyway, so we thought it was a good time to say, “Okay, let's see if this works.”

We've had a couple of hiccups that people floating back over to Skype channels and other things. But it's actually worked quite

well. We have people chatting on it. I checked it just there a moment ago. We have about 3000 – 4000 messages during the Helsinki meeting. So it's been actively adopted because of its Slack-like interface. People are quite comfortable using it. The adoption was pretty good.

Some feedback if you do decide to go down this route. In your early days, do your planning really, really, well. I kind of failed on that and it caused us hiccups. Do extensive testing because there are some things around the internationalization that I discovered so if people want to put in their names using, for example, Arabic script, that's something that you need to be very careful on how you do some of the configuration settings. Make sure that you have everything ready to go before you start putting your members on it. Do a pilot internally with a small team. Try and break it. Mess with your config settings. Make sure everything is the way you want it before you release it to the more general public.

But I have to say it's worked quite well and the members that I've talked to anyway are pretty happy with it. And I would recommend that you guys look into it. I'm perfectly happy obviously to help you guys out with that. For the record, I am an At-Large member so it's all kosher. I'm quite happy for questions or anything that people want to ask.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, James. Very interesting stuff.

I see there's immediately a queue. Olivier Crepin-Leblond.

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND: Thank you very much, Dev. As far as Slack was concerned, we did some extensive – some testing, I can't call it so extensive – but we certainly did some testing on it and of course the cost is one of the big question marks on this. So it's great to see something that's open source, something that is I would gather free to some extent – even the domain name? Because I've noticed it's ncuc.chat. Is that paid for or is that included in the free package?

JAMES GANNON: That was my contribution to it. I felt that we talk a lot about all of our new gTLDs but I thought we should, in the words of Google, eat our own dog food.

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND: Thank you. If I can follow up. So you broke the bank on this one and are supporting ICANN financially. That's great to see parts of ICANN doing that. The ALAC doesn't do this. We usually ask for

money from ICANN. We don't do it the other way around. But anyway. Let's strike this part from the record, please.

I had a question on – you mentioned also there no more Skype. Do you mean that Skype people have moved from Skype and move on to that, or is it that no more Skype as in Skype doesn't work if you run that?

JAMES GANNON:

Thanks, Olivier. No, it's that I think we all probably have our big Skype channels that we all chat on and we said that for this meeting that those channels we wanted them to go dark and we wanted to focus on trying to use this tool. Because when you have a group of people that are used to using one form of communication, the change management journey to get them to go to a new tool can be very difficult. So we said, "This is the Policy Forum. It's a new meeting style. Let's do the experiment with this at the same time and try and see, do we get the adoption on the new tool."

OLIVIER CREPIN LEBLOND:

Thanks, James. And so I think it would be really great if we could have your feedback once this meeting is finished and see if it's as easy to use as Skype. Because we certainly do use Skype channels. The great thing about the Skype channels is if you get

a few people together and it's so easy to add people to the channel, get people in, out, and so on, and it's great. At the same time you can have your own channel. It's not like a case of all the channels are public, so if I just want to speak to Dev and to Ariel, we've got our little thing. If it's as flexible and as stable as well, which I guess is the other thing, then super.

I didn't quite understand one thing. You said that it was working on many different platforms. But I didn't quite understand whether these were you needed separate software to install on the platform or not. Because that's the other thing. Some people access this from their work and have very stringent things on the ports that are being used and on the installation of software on their laptops.

JAMES GANNON:

So just going into a little bit of the tech stuff beside it. So it presents itself as a web interface that comes over port 443 for normal SSL, and it can also come over port 80 for unencrypted. And both the beauty of it is that it presents a web API that a number of desktop applications can also call to. So while you can always use just the web interface which just looks like a website so you're safe to get through corporate firewalls and everything else, you can also use a native app on pretty much any platform that you can think of. I think they support

14platforms. They support Linux, Blackberry, Nokia, N-Gage, N5s. If you can think of it, it probably has a native application.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, James. I see there's a queue here still. Okay.

MIKHAIL MEDRISH: I would like to understand if it is possible to look somewhere at the list of requirements and something like checkbox – this tool this tool, this tool, good, not good – something like this. And from another hand, I suppose some features have the best solution some certain tool. For example, to inform some set of people it is very effective to use some kind of bot, for example. So for this kind of communication, better to use this tool. For another communication, better to use another tool. So to look at the list of such requirements and appropriate tools it will be very interesting, I suppose. Is it possible to look?

JAMES GANNON: Thanks. Yes, so I think I should actually make a point as well. So we don't intend this to, for example, replace our mailing lists. We will still do all of our official policy discussion, for example, on the mailing list. This was intended to build upon a new way of communicating. So I think that goes to your point is that there has to be a matrix of how you handle your communications. It

can't merely be a single point, you are going to do absolutely everything on one tool. Because there are different tools for different solutions. I think building a matrix of different things for different purposes would be a good idea.

MIKHAIL MEDRISH: I understand you. It's okay. It's clear absolutely. I agree. What I meant now it's analysis. You talked about the analysis, the result of analysis in the list. If it is possible to look at it will be great.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Seun?

SEUN OJEDEJI: Yes, Thank you. Thank you, James, for this presentation. I happen to be an NCUC member as well so I think I'm aware of this development.

Because one of the issues that people have is having multiple accounts so you said this integrates with other platforms – does this allow if I have a Jabber account? I can actually with my Jabber account connect to the channel or the group. Is it possible? And I know you probably have not checked that. Just a question now you could ask or later.

The other thing is this looks to it may be good for it to become the perhaps the “unofficial” communication platform for not just the NCUC but for the entire ICANN. So if that happens, I’m wondering... if that doesn’t happen anyhow and then perhaps At-Large decides to go for this, is there an option to actually from my own Rockets connect to yours? Is there kind of connectivity if you want to join your channel without necessarily creating another account on the NCUC? So that’s just a question.

JAMES GANNON:

Thanks. So on your first question, just looking at my backend on the administration, I don’t see an option to log in with a Jabber account. However, I know that I can do anything that can support [OOF], Facebook, GitHub, GitHub Enterprise, GitLab, Google, or LinkedIn accounts. So you can do federated sign-in from all of those.

On connecting chats to chats, as in instances to instances, yes it is there using WebRTC, but from what I’ve researched so far the administration of that is quite complex. So yes it can be done, but I think that would possibly not give you enough value back for the increased administration burden.

DEVANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks. Actually I do have lots of ideas and questions. But maybe I won't have time to ask all of them. But I think probably one key thing is that, how were you able to install the RocketChat? Did you get assistance from ICANN? Or is this something you just did third party hosting and install it yourself?

JAMES GANNON: Yes, thanks. So I have the unfortunate ability that I'm a former recovering sys admin, so this is actually just hosted on my own Amazon Web Services account. It's using basically the Amazon services. It's using an Aurora backend with an instance there to do the frontend. And so I did all the admin and install myself. I didn't go for staff support or anything.

That might be something – we thought it was the best idea to develop it and do some pilot work ourselves, and then if we feel that there's enough value we may come back and put in a budget request to say, "Hey, we want to go and do this officially now." This is purely just a pilot phase to see does our community feel that this is a useful thing. Because we found that we don't really want to go off and ask for money for something for a pilot when it's only \$12 Euro a month. Because we can move quicker than that.

DEVANAND TEELUCKSINGH: I see another hand raised on that. But just to quickly bring in something because we had seen these tools and there's another open source Slack clone called Mattermost. And I think the challenge for us is that there is no easy way for us, perhaps we don't have enough sys admin experience, to really effectively do it on our own. So one of the things [on] the other platforms that we are looking at to addressing that Recommendation #31 is something called eXo Platform, which is a kind of knowledge management/social media network in one that will also integrate wikis and so forth. So that's another tool that we wanted to look at.

I guess my question perhaps, Mark or Corinna, who hopefully they're still on the call, is that how can we really get these tools? Because it sounds like what we really do need is our own testing environment, our own hosting environment, where we just install the tool – once we have that facility – we just install the tool, test it, decide how we like it or not, report on it, and then try another tool. I don't know if Mark or Corinna could say a few words to that effect. Corinna? Mark?

Okay. Well, this is something I want to follow up with staff on this.

CORINNA ACE: Yes, I would like to follow up on this one. I think it probably deserves a little bit more time than the minute we have left, but it is something that we've – like I mentioned to you and it's an ongoing conversation – we've discussed getting this framework to a more standard process for being able to evaluate these needs and get you to a point of just being able to test these platforms. So I think it probably warrants some conversation, and again, more follow up. But I would love to bring this up at the next TTF call and also just discuss with you and whoever else separately is to go forward.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, Corinna. I see Rafik you had your hand raised?

RAFIK DAMMAK: Thanks, Dev. It's just really a small comment here. So it's always about balancing between how much time you will spend in analyzing and to think about all cases [inaudible] and testing. When I discussed with James a few weeks ago, the idea was let's experiment, let's see how it works, what kind of issues, and see how people react.

Also, as he explained in one of his slides, also how you be careful to not have so many issue that let people don't get hooked to that service. So I think better you start, you experiment, you

have that pilot, and also using some... like we thought that Helsinki meeting is a good opportunity to do so. If it was between meetings, I think there will be a low engagement. So it's better I think for you to plan, for example, aim for Hyderabad, experiment, and you get things. That's what I could advise here.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, Rafik. That's a very good suggestion. And I think that getting onboarding is actually quite hard for us. I see Satish, you have a comment?

SATISH BABU: I was one of the early users that signed up for ncuc.chat and I did play around a little bit and I found it pretty easy to use and so on. My worry more is with the edge conditions. APRALO or some parts of ICANN could get pretty large in terms of the [inaudible] number of users in certain conditions. By no means is it an average kind of a thing, but these are things that happen once in a while. How do we test for this edge conditions? Incremental testing is very valuable for general user interface or user friendliness, use UX basically. But the edge conditions are important for us because we don't want this thing to fail at that point.

JAMES GANNON: Just very briefly, I have a colleague that I've met through my research of this who is running it internally in his company with 12,800 users.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Sorry, a follow up on that comment.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Well, there's a queue here. Judith and then Seun.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: I wasn't sure – I liked what you were saying there – but one of our issues that we had with Skype, which is why we were looking at Slack, is the way of searching. So when people mention something, it's very difficult to find it again. And that's one of the things that we saw that Slack had is the ability to search through the archives. But I assume after you get the public archives will also be easily searchable.

JAMES GANNON: Very briefly, if we decide to place this out as a production instance and we start having a large archive and this becomes a problem [then] search, it actually integrates with the last view search and you can actually have a parallel last view search

instance which will sit there and do real time indexing and will do natural language searching for you so that you can say, “What did I say on the 25th of November about Slack?” and it will go off and find those messages. So search is a really cool feature within it once you go to a production instance.

DEVANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, James. Seun, you had a comment? Okay. Thanks for that. Thanks, James, Rafik, I think this is actually quite very interesting and I think it shows a little way forward and how some open source solutions that we can deploy at little cost. And again, I think perhaps we should structure a more... I take your point, Rafik, about let’s have a [info] trial and target it towards the next ICANN face-to-face meeting. So, again, very illuminating and many thanks. And I think we value your feedback and perhaps and we will welcome your participation in future TTF calls.

Thank you. I think we’re coming up to the top of the hour. I think there is one thing that I believe Judith, you wanted to say something regarding the ICANN 56 Meeting App and the Web B scheduling?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Yes. I used both the app and the scheduling. The app is good, but my problems with the app were when you were outside the Wi-Fi, you could not have any access to your schedule. And that was a problem I thought with on the app. I also very much liked on the schedule the webpage that it had that you could subscribe to your own calendar feed. So you can create your own calendar and you can subscribe to the events and then they would update them as things happen. And I do also like that it sends you a reminder each morning of what your day is like on your schedule. What would be great if that schedule thing could be connected to the app and they could talk to each other, because you had to get your schedule, you had to log in. It's the same one you use on the app so it should feed in each other. So hopefully that can be changed.

JOSHUA BAULCH: I appreciate the feedback. Yes, it is something we are addressing. We didn't want to kill our current mobile app. We will be resolving those issues. We were aware of them coming into this and we knew with the smaller meeting because we wanted to introduce the new schedule system on there first with a smaller group. But yes, I appreciate it and we will resolve those.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Okay, and I think, Jimmy, I think you have the last word.

JIMMY [SCHULZ]: Another problem is that the app – it’s really nice, I love it – but the schedule is wrong. There are dates in it that doesn’t exist. We had that yesterday, Ariel and I was talking about that we had an ALAC meeting at 3:15 scheduled that didn’t exist and there are other things may be wrong which are not synchronized with other schedules.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks, Jimmy. I fell for that as well. I was a little bit confused by myself when I went to it.

So okay, I’d like to thank everyone actually, it was great to see so many people coming in early in the morning. Olivier, I see you have a hand raised. Go ahead.

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND: Yes. Thanks, Dev. And just a quick note on our wiki pages. I’ve looked at those and I knew that we had a page at some point which had all of the different products that we had tested. But looking at our home page we’ve got only one thing that’s listed there. It needs a bit of a clean-up. And certainly the comments at

the bottom with dozens of people saying, “Please add me to this list.” This can all be zapped out, please. Clean it up.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thanks. I guess that’s an action item for I guess Ariel and myself. We can just go through and help clean up. I mean, I do also want to like to restructure the wiki page a little bit better and come up with ways.

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND: And certainly an easy to see link because we’re all about userability. We’re all about that and if we can have at least a front page on this and have that... I saw the table somewhere, I can’t find it and I’ve been looking at it for the past 20 minutes. I can’t find it, with all the different products that we’ve tried.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: It is there. And I take your point, though. Glenn, you have a very quick last word here.

GLENN MCKNIGHT: As Dev says, we really appreciate new faces here. We have monthly meetings, so Dev, if you can just let them know when our meetings are and so invite them to the calls.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH: Thank you, and I think it's time. I'd like to thank everyone and [we have] more participants. And again, it was good to see a good turnout for today's session so early in the morning. Thank you all. Good afternoon, good evening to everyone remote. And this call is now adjourned. Have a great day.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]