
ABU DHABI – Middle East Strategy Working Group
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WALID ALSAQAF:

I'd like to quickly, as I welcome you, introduce you to what we have been doing and why this is important. First of all, I'm quite delighted to see that ICANN is in the Middle East, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula. This is a region that we have not seen a lot of activity going on in the ISTAR community since the recent developments of the Internet Society's chapter that's been established in the region, and the increasing attention to the region by ICANN and others. This all points to a very positive trend.

But I can see that the region has been lagging behind in terms of the DNS market. It has been facing economic difficulties. Many of the countries in the region are not properly connected to the Internet, which is as you can imagine, a prerequisite for the active engagement of the community in the DNS market.

So I feel that the effort in the region is going to be collaborative. We cannot have ICANN alone do it. I've also been seeing an interesting engagement or increasing engagement by the At-Large Structures in the region. That has been ISOC chapters and other entities. There has been a very positive trend in number of

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people interested, youth particularly, which [consist of] over 50% of the population.

So I believe that the efforts of the Middle East Strategy Working Group are in the right direction. They are pouring towards helping the economy of the region prosper and progress.

That being said, I must also begin by thanking all members of the Middle East and adjoining countries strategy working group. They've been tirelessly working through the mailing list, through exchanges, by attending webinars to reflect on the needs and aspirations of the region and relating them directly to ICANN and of course the never-ending work and effort by Fahd and Baher are to be commended. They have been spearheading there for some time and consistently trying to bring up the best of the region.

I understand we are a bit late, so I'll try to move on with the schedule as shown on the screen. We'll first perhaps give the floor to [Nahaled] who is a board member. We'd like to have him here, so I'll give him a couple of minutes to give a keynote.

[NAHALED]:

Thank you, Walid. I think you said it quite well. It's very important for ICANN to have its 60th meeting here in the region. We are very happy and glad to have this happening, especially in

the gulf. We wanted to make sure that the engagement of ICANN is still bigger and bigger for the region.

From a board perspective, the engagement will continue to have more and more activities in the region, especially where there will be for sure coming more and more leadership in the community. I'm quite happy to say that at the board level we have internal discussions, very informal one, between us as board members. We have a metric that we are trying to work on and make it bigger and bigger. The metric is how many board members that came out of the ICANN fellowship. It's only two board members for the moment, so I expect that we will be trying to make it bigger and I will count on you.

I see a lot of good faces and good friends that came out from the programs, either fellowships or NextGen. I hope that the work that the ICANN is doing in the Middle East and [inaudible] will be giving us more capacity to act as a region in a more coordinated way. So, thank you again, and I would be more than glad to answer any formal or informal questions.

WALID ALSAQAF:

Thank you, [NAHALED]. Now, as per program, we have Baher and Fahd will be giving us an update on the ongoing implementation on the Strategies Working Group's work.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Thank you, Walid. I'll be sharing my screen just to show you some of the progress we've made the past three months. Just a second, let me figure this out. It's an Excel sheet. It's going to little bit not friendly, but we can read through it.

We are currently in the second era of the implementation plan. We did this review and assessment for the first three months, which is July, August, and September. Of course we are yet to share it with the Strategy Working Group. We worked on this, actually, before ICANN 60, but we haven't been able to finalize it, which is Baher and myself. I'll run really quick on this, for the sake of time and I'm not going to dive deep into each and every item.

One column that we would all want to look at is the different actions that we are undertaking, and I just highlighted it over there on the screen.

Of course, just as a quick refresher, the strategy has three focus areas that we'll be working on. One is actually support a secure, stable, and resilient DNS infrastructure in the region. DNSSEC awareness or capacity development workshops is quite high on our list and we've been able to do two workshops so far for the community. We have also spoken to different ISPs and different technical community people about the work on DNSSEC.

Of course many of you know that the KSK rollover is a really hot topic at the moment within ICANN, and there as well we are raising a lot of awareness amongst the technical community, mainly the ISPs and the data service providers, the DSPs.

Of course we have a partnership with MENOG, which is the Middle East Network Operators Group, where we are leading the DNS related track for this – I mean, during the different road shows and of course the annual event.

We are also looking at maybe holding another train the trainer program. So, as a quick refresher, back in 2015, we trained nine community members from the Middle East and from Africa to actually become future trainers on DNS operations and DNSSEC.

There has been quite a strong demand to actually hold this workshop once again and we will be planning during this fiscal year, which ends on the 30th of June of 2018. Hopefully we will be holding another round of such a workshop.

Of course, ever since the previous train the trainer workshop, we have utilized almost all the trainers that we changed in the different capacity development workshops. So we utilized one trainer during MENOG. We utilized another trainer during a DNSSEC training in Turkey. The same applies to Egypt and in Tunisia as well.

There has been demand also to develop technical content for academia. We have actually a partnership with the research and education network in Tunisia, CCK, where there are workshops held once every two months and those workshops are really more technical. They focus on DNS and IP addresses.

One thing we've been working a lot lately is really engaging with [certs] and law enforcement agencies, and within ICANN within the SSR team at ICANN they provide a one-day workshop on DNS abuse and misuse. We have delivered this workshop to several [certs] and law enforcement agencies around the region and they have found it to be very useful and the demand continues for such workshops.

We were actually supposed to be in [inaudible] next week for a workshop with [cert] in Turkey, but unfortunately we had to defer it to another date due to many reasons.

Of course the taskforce on Arabic script IDNs is another group that we are continuously supporting. The group is currently working on LGR at the second level, and of course they're working on universal acceptance issues. They intend to have a face-to-face meeting sometime in March or April of next year. And of course we as ICANN continue to support their efforts.

End root instances is another thing that we are really pushing around the region. There had been some really good demand for

root server instances. At the moment, we are working with three different hosts on deploying and hosting root servers within their operations.

Moving on to the second focus area, which is promote a healthy and competitive domain name marketplace in the region. Of course, some of you may know or maybe many of you know that we have a really nice and interesting partnership with the DNS Entrepreneurship Center which provides a lot of capacity development workshops, whether technical, legal, or even business and marketing. The Center of course has been doing a lot of projects. They have a couple of partnerships. They have a partnership with IBM. They have a partnership with the University of Cairo in Egypt. And of course they are working on more other issues.

We just released a study entitled Accelerating the Digital Economy in the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey. I'm sure many of you saw that report. That report is really a good source when it comes to our engagement with the business community or, let's say, all stakeholders generally within the region.

Of course we will be holding our usual Turkey DNS Forum and our usual Middle East DNS Forum sometime in 2018. Worth mentioning is that we are considering actually merging both the Turkey DNS Forum and Middle East DNS Forum for 2018 only

because the forum is heading to Turkey. So this is confirmed. We have yet to decide on the city and on the dates. We have a really strong interest from the Turkish community to actually have that forum in Turkey.

Of course we have done a couple of media round tables. So leading to ICANN 60 we held a media gathering in Dubai that was four weeks ago. The objective of that media round table was really to raise awareness on ICANN and of course to promote ICANN 60 and have a strong presence from within the region.

Moving on to the third focus area, which is clarify ICANN's role in an evolving Internet ecosystem through engagement with the community. We have been working closely with At-Large Structures. We circulated a survey to At-Large Structures and there are 20 At-Large Structures that are based in both Middle East and North Africa.

The survey was really simple. We asked them: what capacity development workshops did you deliver during the past 12 months in relations to Internet governance in ICANN? The second question was: what are your plans for the next 12 months? The third question was: how would you like us as ICANN to help you or get involved in your different workshops.

Of course when we solicited the feedback that we received, the majority suggested having more capacity development and of

course conduct workshops with them. And of course national IGFs and national schools on Internet governance was really high on their request list.

Of course, we shared this feedback with our colleagues at At-Large staff so that we can work together on fulfilling some of those requests.

I mentioned a while ago about our academic engagement partnership with CCK in Tunisia, and of course in a while our colleagues from CCK will share more information on that. But one thing I'd like to mention is we would really like to replicate this experience in other parts of the region. Of course, we are open to such partnerships.

Currently, we are talking with two countries. One is Pakistan and one is Turkey. There has been some kind of initial interest, but of course we are still to finalize, let's say, the details there.

Of course, many of you probably know that we have an online learning platform called ICANNLearn. Of course, we within ICANN are trying to improve that platform, try to provide more content. In fact, we will be rolling out a new platform very soon. And, of course, we do encourage stakeholders to actually go to that website and do one of two things, really. Either enroll in one of the courses that is available or develop content. Actually, it's a crowdsourcing platform. It's not necessarily that ICANN or

ICANN staff develop content or courses on that platform. If you think you have the capability and you have the time to actually develop a top-class course on something related to Internet governance or ICANN, you are really welcome to do that. Of course, it's an extra advantage if you can provide non-English content. Maybe languages – developing content in one of the languages used within the region.

Still speaking of academic engagement. We did a lot of academic engagement the past couple of weeks, mostly leading to ICANN 60. We did I think six or seven academic engagements here in the United Arab Emirates leading to ICANN 60. We did some academic engagement in Egypt and Bahrain, and we actually embarking on more academic engagement in other countries around the region.

Engagement with civil society is another topic that we are really pushing hard for. Of course, many of you know civil society or even grassroots civil society NGOs in this region are not very common, and there are a lot of challenges when it comes to engagement with civil society. And platforms actually for engaging with civil society have been quite limited in the region. It's worth mentioning that within the Strategy Working Group we have a small subgroup that is actually working on civil society engagement, so the subgroup thankfully developed a plan or a document or a white paper on how to engage with civil society.

In that document, the group identified the nature of engagement we can do in relation to civil society and who are the entities that we can actually partner to do more streamlined civil society engagement.

Of course, we still are utilizing different platforms to reach to as wide of a stakeholder proportion as possible. We use mailing lists, social media, one-on-one emails. One of the things we are also looking into is to actually utilize fellows, NextGen, from ICANN to help us with the different engagements we do at ICANN.

Of course, promoting ICANN fellowship and ICANN NextGen program is another thing that we continuously strive to.

One good piece of information that I can share with all of you is that for the past maybe one or two years, even more, almost 25% of the applications that the fellowship program receives actually originates from this region of 26 countries. Of course, we have a high number of applications usually flowing in from Pakistan and Tunisia. For ICANN 60, we had a really good number of applications from Afghanistan, but the key constrain remains is that the fellowship program is really limited to the number of slots it can provide, and at the same time, they do some gender balance and even geography balance, so eventually after 25% who apply from within the region, my

colleges at the fellowship program with just maybe eight to maximum ten – to selecting eight to ten participants from within the region.

As many of you know, we have our school on Internet governance. We held the fourth edition of this school in Ankara very recently in August. Our local host was the ccTLD of Turkey. That was another good school where we had more than 30 participants attending from I think 13 or 14 countries. All of them within the region. We had also a participate from the United States who was based in Turkey.

A good piece of news. We have a couple of partners who are really interested in working on this school. Of course, from the very inception of this school, from the very first day of this school, we envisioned the school to actually phase out from ICANN being the lead on it to become more of something that is run, or a platform that is run, by the community.

Of course, worth mentioning is that we never branded the school as an ICANN event. It was really more of an ISTAR event and we hope that this event gets branded to become more of a community led event.

At the moment, we have the Arab World Internet Institute and the Internet governance project as key partners in this school

where each one has different roles, and hopefully we look forward to the 2018 edition of the school. I'm almost done.

There has been a huge surge in demand for national IGFs and national schools on Internet governance. Of course, we as ICANN, we are really limited in terms of resources. We have a region of 26 countries. It's only Baher and myself who cover this region, but again, we try our best. We strive to help stakeholders in different countries who are interested in launching a national platform. And, of course, if our time permits and we see it as a priority, we also try to attend these different platforms in person.

I think I can stop there. I'll hand over the mic to the chair. Thank you.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

Thank you, Fahd. Sorry for warning you of the time because we have a very tight school and several speakers. I'll proceed now with we call thematic topics. Thematic topics are basically an opportunity for members of the working group to reflect on things that they have worked on and believe that might be of value to the Middle East community.

I'd like to start directly with the first topic, which is about the enhancing the Middle East and adjoining countries strategy

working groups effectiveness and impact. Here we'll be having three speakers. Each will divide. Probably they have divided the time among them. Michael, Zakir, and Chokri will proceed.

MICHAEL OGHIA:

Thank you. My name is Michael Oghia. I'm a second-time fellow. I've been a part of the Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group since its inception. I just want to quickly introduce why my colleges and I wanted to talk about this.

The point of this 10-minute section is to at least address how we can enhance the administrative effectiveness and external impact of the MEAC-SWG, how we can work better together to implement the strategy, and then also we're going to discuss a bit about internal versus external collaboration.

What I'm going to be focusing on specifically is the external aspect of this, and basically when Zakir and Chokri and I were talking, we came to the conclusion about this particular process that, especially if you think about what Fahd has been talking about with this implementation strategy, it's two staff members working the region trying to do all of this work on their own. It's basically how can we help – we, the members of the SWG – really help other organizations, other initiative, and other programs in the region, whether that be through what Chokri will be talking more about, which is more through our subgroups. In this

particular sense, the outreach and engagement subgroup. Then, also, how do we engage with new communities?

I don't mean to just ask these somewhat rhetorical questions. I definitely mean for us over the course of the existing strategy and over the next year to really think about this. I personally feel that there's in many ways a lack of capacity in the region to continue carrying out these programs. But, at the same time, there's a lot of demand, which is great, but then somehow we need to ask ourselves as people engaged in the Internet governance ecosystem in the region, how do we best meet that capacity and whose job is it to do that?

Ultimately, even though the SWG is focused on ICANN's larger remit, which is quite minimal in the sense that it's focusing on the DNS, I think it's really important and also reflective of the third pillar of our strategy, that in order to develop – by focusing on Internet governance as a whole, we will also be addressing the vital aspect that is the DNS space and other things in the program such as diversity, through things like the IDN programs and other aspects that really helps to develop who we are.

One of the things that I had thought for this section especially is we should really be asking ourselves where are the resources needed? There are a lot of good organizations doing work in the region. There's RIPE NCC, there's the Arab World Internet

Institute, there's the DNS Entrepreneur Center. Now of course [inaudible] is going to be really spearheading everything with the ISOC bureau.

Of course, for those who know, obviously, I hate to say that unfortunately [inaudible] is not going to be active anymore in the region, so there's definitely a gap in capacity delivery.

I really encourage all of us to step up where we can to do more in terms of outreach and engagement, but also to really see and connect with those organizations already doing that to see where we can give them support to continue to do this work. Thank you.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

Have we agreed on who is next?

ZAKIR BATAYNEH:

Good morning. My name is Zakir and I'm a member of the Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group. As Michael talked about, external collaboration to be able to enhance the MEAC-SWG's effectiveness and impact, I'll be talking about the internal collaboration within the membership base of the Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group members.

We plan to have a subgroup within the membership base of the SWG. The subgroup will actually work towards enhancing the strategy working group effectiveness and impact. Recently, actually, there are actually new members and those who are already members of the [inaudible]. If you remember, we recently revised the charter of the SWG, and since then we are getting more members, new members and new observers to the SWG and it's tough for them to catch up what exactly is going on within the SWG.

So, this internal subgroup that we are going to propose and we are going to work with the chair on this will specifically work on the new members and new observers to help them coach and mentor, to be more actively involved in the SWG in order to make the strategy more effective and to make its impact more visible within the region and within the ICANN community as well.

This SWG will actually be holding more frequent calls within this subgroup, actually, not for the entire membership. Specifically those who are entrusted to work on this internal collaboration within SWG to be able to help the newcomers and to help, mentor, and guide those newcomers. It will actually be holding webinars so as to tell them what exactly is the strategy and what are we targeting. We expect to get members in this subgroup from different stakeholders and from different countries within

the scope of this strategy, the Middle East strategy. Then we are also planning to have more frequent calls between these members so they can help contribute towards making this strategy more effective and its impact more visible.

I won't take much more time. I will share the mic with my colleague, Chokri, who will tell you more about the structure of the subgroups. Actually, some of the subgroups have already been proposed within the SWG and he's going to talk to you more about the structures and the functions of these SWGS. So, if anybody is interested in these subgroups within the SWG [inaudible]. Right after the meeting we will share an e-mail on the list, and if anybody is interested, they are more welcome to come and help us at this internal collaboration thing. Thank you very much.

CHOKRI BEN ROMDHANE: Okay. Thank you, Zakir. I will speak in French. Yes, just like it was said by Zakir, our colleagues with Michael and Zakir, we tried to – in order to improve the impact and the efficiency of our group, we tried to restructure this group by applying a model. And we're going to go to the next slide.

We're going to try to use what ICANN looks into for groups. We're going to use that model not to organizations or to structures, defined structure, but to a group.

We have very brilliant members in that group. They have high capacities and they'll be able to help us out to put together a very strong group. We're going to have several subgroups. We try to formalize this in our last charter from June 2007. We have to look at the keywords that you can see on this document, so we don't have to exactly define those ideas. I'll let you look at this document on the screen. You can look at this charter. This is what we're going to do. I tried to formalize this with this process, and I'm going to share that with you with the next slide.

That's the process, to manage subgroups. First identify the issues. We're going to have the SWG. We're going to have those tasks. If the chair of the group considers that it is a very important topic, you can use it as a proposal so it is transformed into a working group and it's going to be done via comments. The comments are going to be posted by the group members. That's the second phase, the SWG comments. Based on those comments and on those results, the chair is going to decide to adopt or reject the subgroup proposal. Then there is the creation of a new subgroup or it's going to be rejected possibly.

The fourth phase is that the chair is going to open a call for membership for the members of the group. Those who are interested in joining that group will be able to do so.

The fifth phase is the subgroup list update. We're going to try to update that list of subgroups. We're going to add or close those whose activities were achieved.

So, this is a five-step process. I would like to know what feedback you have on this process.

Now we'll look at those subgroups that are being proposed. We have the Entrepreneurship Subgroup. We have Government Relations Subgroup, Outreach and Engagement Subgroup, Academia Subgroup, Charter Amendment Subgroup. You can see it. If you have other ideas, please let us know. You're quite welcome to do so. We're not finished. It's not a definitive number of subgroups, but this is what we came up with so far.

In this slide, I tried to give you an idea on how the subgroup is going to function and work. After being formed, the chair is going to have this SWG and they're going to work by consensus and see who is going to be the leader of the subgroup. They're going to [inaudible] the work plan, the methods, to work together. They'll be able to share this draft for comments. They're going to share it with the community to look into the comments coming from the community. The fifth step to submit the final report to the chair.

I put number six in red. Close subgroup activities. Subgroup can be closed or keep working.

This is quite open. Thank you very much. If you have any questions or if you want to know more about this structure, please let me know.

WALID ALSAQUAF: We are another 10 minutes late, so we need it to be quick. There will be an opportunity for questions at the end, so we have all the speakers. Thank you very much Michael, Zakir, and Chokri for this informative intervention.

Now we have the second topic on assessing and strengthening the DNS industry. If possible at all, maybe you can have it less than 10 minutes, if you would like more discussion. The floor is yours, Hadia. Go ahead.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Good morning, everyone. Hadia Elminiawi speaking for the record. Next slide, please. Could we scroll? I will do it. Okay, thank you. It's fine. I can do that.

I'll be talking about the regional DNS industry, the challenges and opportunities. And then strengthening the industry in the region. Next slide, please.

Before I start, I would like to have a quick glance at Verisign's latest domain name industry brief. Top three ccTLDs by number

of reported domains are dot-cn with 21.4 million (China), dot-de with 16.2 million (Germany), and dot-uk with 10.7 million.

What do these countries share? What do they have in common? Well, all three countries happen to have strong digital economies. According to a white paper issued by China Academy of Information and Communication Technology, digital economy contributes to 30.3% of China's GDP. Both the U.K. and Germany are among the countries with the highest retail sales in Europe. The U.K. having retail sales at 77.63 billion Euros, and Germany having retail sales at 72.69 billion Euros.

All three being ranked at top business to consumer e-commerce sales. E-commerce is an important element for the growth of domain names.

I think there is one slide before that, Fahd. Yeah, that's it.

Let's now look at the digital economy in our region. Before starting an online business, you need to make two very important decisions. One is your domain name, which is your brand; and two, your web hosting company. This online trading is important for having a growing number of domain name registrations.

With regard to online retail in the region, we find that it is very low. Only about 2% of all retail spent is made online. The

region's e-commerce market is experiencing rapid growth as its population of about 315 million gradually gets online. The region has the lowest account penetration with only 17.7% of adults reporting a formal account. Financial inclusion is limited for the majority of the people in the region. Online payments is among the biggest factors holding back e-commerce growth in the region. 60% of online trading in GCC region are still paid in cash at the point of delivery, which is expensive for retailers. Next slide, please.

All the elements for a successful digital market exist. Internet penetration rate is more than 90% in some of the GCC countries, which is higher than the Internet penetration rates in Europe and North America. This is in addition to the high penetration rate of smartphones. Moreover, the people in the region enjoy high disposable income. Therefore, GCC region has potential of being the fastest-growing e-commerce region.

The Middle East market is one of the most underpenetrated e-commerce markets and has a huge potential for growth. Some companies are starting to realize the opportunities and enter the market.

As an example, Amazon acquired .com, paying \$580 million in cash for [Zook]. [Zook] has localized sites for the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait. Most recently [Zook.com] acquired

[Wing.ae] which connects merchants and delivery couriers aiming to provide same and next day delivery to its customer. [Zook.com] claims over 45 million visitors per month and range of 8.4 million products across 31 categories.

E-commerce contributes by just 0.5% to the GDP of the GCC, which is four to eight times lower than comparable markets. Currently, the e-commerce market in the region is much smaller compared to similar markets.

Research published shows that small changes to a company's online presence, including e-mail and web addresses could result in a significant increase in the business opportunities for [SMEs] and an increase in their revenues.

Looking at the region, we find that most of their [SMEs] in the region are not online. 7% of Egyptian small and med businesses have online presence. 18% of UAE small and medium business have online presence, and 37% of Turkey. This is according to a report published by ICANN under the name Accelerating the Digital Economy in the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey. Next slide, please.

I would like to highlight two points. Access to the Internet to the region is mainly via mobile devices. The chart on the right shows the various devices through which the users connect to the Internet. Smartphones – I see that it's not clear, but the Middle

East is just the most right common. If you look at the most right column, smartphones are in light blue and we can see that they have the highest numbers of use in regard to Internet connectivity.

Another observation – yeah, you can find Middle East and Africa and the light blue, those are smartphones. So, most of the access to the Internet is through smartphones.

Another observation, domain name registration mainly takes place where local hosting industry and web development sectors exist. Can we have the following slide, please? Thanks.

Digital economy is growing in the region. With only about 2% of all retail spent today made online, the good Internet penetration rates, the changing preferences of shoppers and the businesses that are starting to realize the possible increase in their revenues as they go online. In addition to the governments realizing the benefits the digital economy brings to the growth of their economies, digital economy is growing.

Many countries throughout the region realize the importance to digitally transform their countries. And looking at other markets – for example, the online retail sector is the main driver of growth in European and North American retailing, achieving in Europe growth rates of 15.6% in 2016.

I mentioned before that the digital economy contributes to 30.3% of China's GDP. So definitely digital economy is important for the growth of the country's economy.

Young population. Is young population important? Yes, it is. They are the heaviest users of the Internet. I must note that aging population also uses the Internet heavy.

56% Internet penetration. This is an opportunity because penetration rates are good. We have 56% in the region with more than 90% in some of the GCC countries like the UAE.

Challenges. Can we go – yeah. Change. Next. Okay, I'm sorry for that.

So, the challenges. Among the challenges is the Internet accessibility and affordability. This is not true for the entire countries in the region. It's only true for some of the countries.

Local hosting and local content. Local hosting helps the business get relevant traffic to their businesses. In addition, locally hosted websites will be faster to load and presumably cheaper. Troubleshooting in case the site is down could also be quicker.

A lack of Internet exchange points. This is important so that traffic is not routed through Europe leading to [inaudible] and latency. Enhancing also local connectivity.

Financial inclusion. I mentioned before that it is an important factor. Currently, it does hold the growth of e-commerce in the region.

Customer trust. Customers need to trust the metrics they are using before they enter their personal details like home addresses and phone numbers. They need also to have confidence that they are using a secure network through which they can make their credit card payments in addition.

I just showed the other, but there is a delay. You can give me the benefit. There is a delay. Okay, okay.

These are the challenges. Could we scroll through?

I have some examples. Basically, the next three slides are some examples of the point of view of some of the ccTLDs in the region. I have Egypt, Tunisia, and dot-ma. We can go straightaway to dot-ma, which is the third slide.

Currently, dot-ma are providing workshops – oh, provided workshops on the deployment of DNSSEC for dot-ma registrars. These workshops were in coordination with ICANN. They're raising awareness of the users about the importance of the deployment of the DNSSEC and they are opening the registration of IDNs under dot-ma.

The challenges that they see are promoting dot-ma and deploying DNSSEC under all domain names under dot-ma.

Strengthening the market. I'll be really quick. It's important for the governments to work on developing the skills of the population. Digital literacy is very important. People should not only know how to access the Internet and use the technology, but they should also be able to know how to make use of the information and the data that they have. They need to be able to use the Internet efficiently.

Provide digital government service, content in local language, promote financial inclusion, set regulations, and encourage online use. Of course, ensure the security of the networks and provide affordable and accessible Internet, encourage local hosting and—

WALID ALSAQUAF:

I think the slides will be available to the members.

HADIA ELMINIAWAI:

That's it. I have only one slide and that's it. It's the recommendation for the registries and registrars. They need to have open registration policies, effective dispute resolution mechanisms, deploy DNSSEC and ipv6 and various payment methods.

WALID ALSAQUAF: Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWAI: And I'm done. Thank you so much for bearing with me.

WALID ALSAQUAF: Thank you, Hadia. I can tell you put a lot of effort in this, so we appreciate that. Now to the third speaker, Habib Yousef. Yes?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: A really quick note. It seems that the slides are having a delay of maybe a couple of seconds just to display on the screen, so please just tell me next slide and just continue talking while the slide is up here on the screen. I don't know what the issue is and I apologize for that in advance.

HABIB YOUSEF: That's okay, though. Go to the third slide. Who am I, or who are we actually? We are an organization that provides Internet application service to the entire academic community in Tunisia. We touch all universities and research center, student dorms and everybody. You are well positioned to enter into this education program with ICANN.

This program was initiated in July 2016. It was on the initiative of Baher, who is with us now. We had the first meeting on Skype and we exchanged the MOU that we put in place and we signed and we started [inaudible] this program since 2017.

What were the objectives of this program? Mainly to raise awareness among the academic community. Basically students and [inaudible] faculty.

To complement the information that we delivered to students, usually that's part of Internet governance. It's very, very slightly covered. It's important that our students get involved in this important technology.

To create stronger energy between ICANN and academic institutes. Since we have, we touch on all institutes, we can reach them through our mailing list and we have also a website that gives them regular information, what's going on in terms of academic activities or ICANN activities as well. We are well positioned for that.

So far, we have organized four workshops. Two of them were in 2016 and two in 2017, and we have been trying to move in the countries. A couple of them in the two largest campuses in Tunis and one in the center of Tunisia [inaudible] and the other in the south.

They were workshops that drew lots of people. There were roughly 150 participants per workshop. They were animated by local speakers, mainly local speakers – Tijani, [inaudible], local technical staff from CCK. In fact, a few members. We involved faculty members as well. The local industrial community.

ICANN also helped us through [Adiel] from Canada for the workshop of [Zeus].

We have future workshops that are programmed. One this month, the fourth week of November and beginning of 2018.

Where we are trying to improve the infrastructure to have to reach more students, so that people – it is not really easy to bring people to the location of these workshops, etc., so we are putting in place a collaboration platform to give the opportunity for students to participate live in these activities.

We are also likely to establish some sort of performance indicators on how these things have been effective to reaching these communities, how many people for example visit the platform that you have, the website that you have, etc.

We are also putting in place starting the next event an evaluation survey. We had an evaluation survey, but it was not really a thorough evaluation survey. We had some feedback

from participants. But this is to maintain basically a database on past events, as well as to be able to improve our future activities.

We'd like also to improve the implementation of ISOC and IGF Tunisia in these events. ISOC did not really get involved except the first contact that [you] had with Baher. It was [inaudible] who told me that Baher would like to initiate something with you, and it was on the basis of that that we signed this MOU.

We would like also our students to be aware of this fellowship program, and try to assist them into getting involved, knowing how to apply because the process is not really that easy for Tunisian who are not really very well acquainted with the system.

Also, we would like to improve the future workshops by trying to [inaudible] because we have been running half the workshops, and only in one location we had the full day workshop. To be able to cover various topics and attract more we are thinking for running [parallel] sessions.

Basically, that's all I have to say.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

Okay, thank you. Less than five minutes, so I'm impressed.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

I don't have slides. It's just a talk. I wanted to introduce how the Domain Name System Entrepreneurship Center is approaching the academic sector.

We are actually doing this through three methods. The first is through a partnership with the Egyptian universities network, and through this partnership, we have been able to contact courses to the operators of the various Egyptian universities of the network operation centers of the universities.

The second method is through partnering or approaching big companies with programs for students' skill development. In this regard, we partnered with IBM. We have been able together to conduct back-to-back courses where students would sign for an IBM course and then have the choice to sign for a domain name system related course as well.

Also, they've been helping us in conducting surveys, so they would distribute surveys on our behalf to their students that would ask them about their opinion about or if they would like to – how much they know about the domain name system, if they would like to have courses and so forth.

Most recently, we conducted with IBM a domain name hackathon where students used IBM analytic services to analyze the data of zone files.

The third method through which we are approaching the academic sector is directly, through a list that we gather by attending career fairs or through lists exchanged or given to us by IBM. For that, we partnered with ITI, which is the Information Technology and Information Center to have it as a premises where we can conduct these courses.

Looking forward, I would like to approach entrepreneur camps, summer camps. Actually, in Egypt, we have quite a few of these and very successful startups have come out of such camps.

Another thing also we are in the process of is establishing an MOU with [Nigeria] Internet Registry Association and with the [inaudible] Research and Education Network. With this kind of partnership, we are aiming to approach the region and the Arabic countries.

That's it. Thank you.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

Fantastic. Thank you, Hadia. So that was the academic engagement part of this working group. So we move to the final track, which is about side effects on censoring mobile apps on the DNS industry in the region. That will be Mahdi and Farzaneh. Please proceed.

MAHDI TAGHIZADEH: Good morning, everybody. About this issue, I want to bring your attention that we will not limit this discussion only to mobile applications. We will speak more generally. I would like to, following our discussions in yesterday's session of Middle East space, I'd like to provide you with some real-world examples and cases related to this topic. And [Farzie] will talk about it in more general.

Recently, we had a lot of cases, many of them directly related to Iran and other countries in the region. But a lot of users in Iran are affected by the [inaudible]. I'm telling you these cases and we continue to discuss.

We had the [Risol] case recently. [Risol] is a registrar. [Risol] has recently put limitations for some Iranian clients as it looks like more like a ransom, not a limitation. I will explain it in a blog post later. It's an issue that we are facing and a lot of users in Iran were using [Risol] services.

Another thing that we are facing right here in these meetings is the issue we have with Adobe. Adobe is blocking all incoming connections from Iran. So whenever I want to be in a meeting remotely from Iran, I have a problem and I need to use a [inaudible] or something to be able to use the Adobe Connect for remote participation.

Another example is there are a lot of services using, for example, the Google Cloud platform and GCP has blocked all Iranian IP addresses. So you're using a service that a company doesn't want to block you, but because they're using the [GSM] services, the Google is blocking the service using IP filtering. This is another example. Many, many other services by Google that are restricted for Iranian users.

We also recently had the issue with Apple removing a lot of Iranian businesses applications, which is not directly related to DNS industry but all in all it's related to Internet. I think it's related to ICANN, too.

I will publish a detailed post about different types of such technology related sanctions as it will help our group members understand and have a better understanding about what we're talking about. So not to ask a generalized statement as we had [inaudible] yesterday. I will try to reference that blog post in our statement for [inaudible]. Thank you.

FARAZANEH BADI:

Thank you. My name is Farazaneh Badii and I'm going to be very brief in my intervention, and it's going to be about domain name system and registrants.

For a long time, domain name registrants who reside in countries that are sanctioned by the US have been facing arbitrary cancellation after domain names and been forced to transfer to other registrars.

Now, a lot of the registrars are actually located in the US, so they have to follow us sanctions. This does not relate directly to ICANN. However, some of the registrars that are located outside of the US also imposed sanctions and follow OLFAC.

We have tried at ICANN to raise awareness about this issue, and recently we've been almost successful in asking ICANN to get an OLFAC license.

This is not only about domain name registration. It's also about DNS training. It's about also participating in ICANN policymaking. We have to get OLFAC license for the participants that reside [are] nationals of sanctioned countries. These countries include Iran, Syria, Yemen, and some other countries.

I could go on about the cases because I think that's what people wanted to know more about.

ICANN in its registrar agreement had a clause that said that they are not obliged to go and get an OLFAC license for a registrar. That means that if we want to have a registrar in Iran or other sanctioned countries in the Middle East, then they could just say,

“No, you can’t be accredited.” So we have also tried to ask ICANN to remove this clause from the agreement. Hopefully they will get a general OLFAC license that can allow domain name registrant and also the DNS industry in general to be accessible to people residing in these countries. Thank you.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

Thank you very much. I believe we now have the opportunity. Do we want Nick to? It’s an opportunity now to hear from our managing director of ICANN’s regional office in Istanbul, Nicholas or Nick Tomasso. We give him the floor to give us a few words.

NICK TOMASSO:

Well, thank you very much. And yes, it is Nick. Nicholas is much too formal. A few months ago ICANN announced a new international [inaudible] strategy. It was designed to help improve accountability, provide some consistency, and clarify roles within the organization and across through our constituency groups.

We shifted from a three global hub model of Los Angeles, Singapore, and Istanbul to having five regional offices based in Los Angeles, Brussels, Montevideo, Singapore, and Istanbul – so, serving the five geographic regions.

We already had an office in Istanbul, but we have changed the mission of that office. Formerly, it was created to serve the time zone from Northern Europe to South Africa. Now it is the Middle East and Africa regional office in Istanbul. Working with my colleagues, my very close colleagues in the region – Mahr, Fahd as well as Pierre and others in the Africa region, and as well as our partnership center in Cairo and our engagement center in Nairobi – we have 28 staff in the Istanbul office. Now, 21 of them sit in Istanbul, four in Africa, two in the Middle East, and one in Pakistan. That represents 11 ICANN functions. I'm giving you this bit of background to show you the resources we can bring to bear within the region.

We also have five additional functions sitting in Brussels and Geneva that we can call on at will, and of course we can always go back to Los Angeles to round out the full spectrum of ICANN support and services.

The goal of the Middle East and Africa regional office is to provide the highest level of engagement and operation support for the region and that's what we're doing. That's what the three of us will be focusing our energies on. I know that amazing work has been done by the community and also by my colleagues who are already there. Hopefully with a little bit more focus and attention, we can drive some additional resources, and as I said, focus into the Middle East.

I look forward to working with all of you. I hope you call on me often. As I said, I'm looking forward to the engagement with all of you. Thank you.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

Thank you very much. And as someone who knows Turkish very well, I might pop by.

Let's use now the opportunity to address any other business before we move on to the open discussion. I personally would like to raise one important item that we have been working quite hard for the last three months, I'd say, or even longer, to understand if there is need to change the name of the working group. We have come to a rather interesting debate on whether the wording of adjoining countries might make some members not totally happy.

We wanted to know if there is need to change the name of not. We did have debates. We did have a poll. It wasn't conclusive, actually. The result was not based on consensus. It was majority vote.

However, we actually need to make a decision. It cannot hang forever. So, I'd like to know if there are objections to continuing on with the actual name right now first, and objections if we'd like to change it back to the Middle East Strategy Working Group.

Originally, I believe that was the name given before the change happened.

First, are there objections to continuing with the Middle East and Adjoining Countries Working Group? This also applies to the remote participants who are with us.

Please, Hadia.

HADIA ELMIAWI:

Walid, I think that we need to hear from the countries or the people that basically were unhappy with the name. If I recall, maybe they were from Afghanistan and Pakistan. I'm not sure. But I think that those are the ones that we need to hear from them.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Thank you, Walid. I just wanted to share some perspectives here. Within ICANN, the Middle East that Baher and myself cover really consists of 26 regions. That's the 22 Arab states, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Now, if you go to [books], if you go to the Internet, you will not find one, let's say, defined or agreed upon definition for the Middle East. Some people consider Turkey to be part of the

Middle East. Some people consider it to not be part of the Middle East. Then of course there are many other countries.

Now, the Middle East that we cover – again, sometimes when I explain to people the region that we cover, I would tell them it's Western Asia and North Africa. Now, why did we include this set of 26 countries within the Middle East? There were many reasons. Some of them maybe the same culture, the same script, or even – sometimes we look at it from a political angle.

Again, at the end of the day, regardless of what other countries that we cover within the region, we call ourselves the Middle East. I just wanted to share that point.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

Just a very quick note. The history of this discussion started when there were objections to the word “adjoining.” They were thinking of another alternative that's more, let's say, maybe diplomatic because there might be a feeling of inferiority and superiority. There is the Middle East and then there are adjoining countries. While the adjoining countries are rather big countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan in population and size are not small countries.

So, that was the original discussion. That was what happened. Then we had the vote, and then it turned out that people were

okay mostly to go back to the Middle East name, which then is defined in a footnote that these are the countries considered by ICANN to be in the Middle East. That's just a background of what the issue is.

MARILYN CADE:

Thank you. My name is Marilyn Cade and I appreciate your allowing me to make a brief comment. I'm sorry that I don't think Omar is in the room who is the business member to the BC who is the CEO of Tech Nation.

The purpose in taking the microphone, I work in the international fora within the UN system and the regional system. My only comment to you is that in addition to how you consider this – and this is largely meant for the ICANN staff – I do think you have to think about how what brands mean.

When you do a search on casa or you do a search on Mena, you get a list of countries. If you're going to use a unique terminology, then you do have the opportunity to create a brand around that. But, the brand is already defined for certain other terms because of the history of how it's been used in the UN system or used by companies.

The Mena region means something very, very specific to the corporate world and they have organized their marketing and

their presence around that. So, I'm not objecting to what you're saying. I'm just trying to give you a piece of useful information.

Let me give you an analogy. How many people here know what WEOG means as a region? Okay, he's cheating. He's with ICANN. And you're cheating because you live there. That's a joke. But, one of the challenges about WEOG, it's Western Europe and Other Governments.

My only comment to you is if you decide you're going to use a unique word, you have the opportunity to find it. If you use Mena, then realize you may need to have a footnote that says here are the countries you put in it, if the business sector is going to understand.

WALID ALSAQUAF: Thank you. Baher?

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Walid. This is Baher for the record. Thank you for raising this under any other business [inaudible]. It's actually very difficult to cover this topic in 10 minutes or even 30 minutes, but I understand that it's been hanging for quite some time on the mailing list.

Very quickly, and just to be clear, from ICANN’s standpoint, we follow the UN geographic regional structure. Five main regions. We do not actually invent regions. Within the five regions, we have sub-regions like Eastern Europe, like Middle East, like the Pacific Islands. As an engagement team, we had more regional teams focusing on those areas because we thought it would be very difficult for a team of two or three people, for example, to cover the whole Asia-Pacific. Same for Africa.

When I started with ICANN as regional staff for the Middle East, the region only included Egypt and then the rest of the Middle East countries in Asia including Iran, plus Afghanistan and Pakistan. It didn’t include the rest of the Arab countries that fall under Africa.

But then when we started on the regional engagement strategy or effort four years ago – four or five years ago – we got feedback from the community that the strategy should also cover the rest of the Arab countries because of the commonalities between Arab countries in terms of needs and so forth.

Since then, the Middle East regional strategy has been covering [whole] Arab countries, plus Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey.

Anything we do in Africa in terms of engagement, we do it in close cooperation with the African team, including in North

Africa. The discussion about the name, whether it's Middle East or Middle East and Adjoining Countries popped up a couple of years ago from community members, mainly from Pakistan and [inaudible]. They felt that their countries and communities do not exactly fall under Middle East. They're kind of at the edge of the Middle East and there was suggestion to call the strategy working group Middle East Strategy and Adjoining Countries Working Group and there was sort of consensus on this renaming of the Working Group.

There was also an agreement to keep the name of the region as far as ICANN engagement is concerned as Middle East in order not to further confuse people. I just wanted to make this intervention. I hope it's clear and it doesn't cause more confusion. Thank you.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

Okay. For the sake of time, I believe that we can again move this to the mailing list. It appears not many people are able to speak on behalf of the countries that are not in the Middle East. Is it pressing? Can it wait until [inaudible]? Okay, briefly, please.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

I'm going to speak French once again. According to me, it's not the name of the region which is that interesting. The team or

[inaudible] the entire region. So I have a suggestion, which would target a division of the region in sub-regions in order to better serve the entire region we could have sub-regions and [inaudible] member to be impacted by what ICANN is offering to the entire region.

So, my idea is not to change the name of the region, but do we cover the entire region with the ICANN activities.

WALID ALSAQUAF:

It's a good way to move on to the mailing list. I understand that time is very limited. I hope that we can be given – is there a session after us, Fahd? There is. There's a few minutes to talk, but anyone with comments and suggestions maybe perhaps have not spoken yet, so we can give them the opportunity. Please, introduce yourself.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

This is [inaudible]. Good morning. I have just a question for the Middle East engagement team. What about your work [inaudible] of your engagement? Are you guys working with Iranian government to deal with the issues or to better the issues, the sanctions [inaudible] and all those issues highlighted by [inaudible] and Mahdi.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The issues related to the sanctions, of course there are many issues in relation to the sanctions and many, many of those issues actually fall outside our agreement as ICANN. The part that concerns us is ICANN is that related to the DNS.

In there, we do – and under are probably a couple of countries in the region in the Middle East who are affected with those sanctions.

What this means to us in terms of engagement, it means actually a little bit more time to get things done. Sometimes we do need to get approvals to, for example, travel people from Iran to come to ICANN meetings and so forth. It may also impact our engagement activities on the ground in those countries, but all it takes is more time to get some approvals.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Sorry, a follow-up question. Being a US [inaudible] US ICANN, [inaudible] as you can see sanctions by the US and ICANN has to follow all those sanctions. So, [inaudible] in ICANN meetings [inaudible] fellows. Our directive is ICANN [inaudible] support. If it comes to us, it comes to the sanctions – how you see all those things working. Just because of sanctions, ICANN has to follow all those obligations as a US entity because [inaudible] in the US. So what about the [funded] fellows coming from Iran and [inaudible] to the Iranian community?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: This is what I'm saying. We do have [funded] travelers coming from Iran and they were approved to come, but as I said, we needed a special process between ICANN as a US-based organization and the government of the US to get the approvals to those people, not to come, actually, for ICANN to pay them. Does that answer?

WALID ALSAQUAF: Thank you. I believe there was a request for intervention. Has anyone here [inaudible]? Yes, please.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thank you, Walid. I just wanted to highlight the ICANN Wiki initiatives that can help this strategy and in terms of outreach, there are some people from the region who are joining this ICANN Wiki to translate the ICANN content website and the constituencies website in different language. [inaudible] but we are doing now in Arabic. This is very interesting. [inaudible] somehow is a barrier for outreach and more involvement within ICANN. So please, if you can join the team.

There are also some people who are from the region who join to bring more initiatives and ideas.

WALID ALSAQUAF: Thank you. Anyone else who hasn't spoken? Go ahead, please.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hi, my name is [inaudible]. I am the director of ccTLD of Iran. I just want [inaudible] actually regarding remote participation of Iranians because I think that ICANN is using the Adobe and Adobe actually blocks IP addresses. So I think that this is a matter of urgency that ICANN can look into that. If you can not negotiate with Adobe, maybe you can change the platform because actually the people cannot attend to the remote participation for the meetings. Thank you.

WALID ALSAQUAF: Thank you. Actually, we did run this issue with our colleagues from the technical team. It's actually Iran, Syria, and Sudan who find difficulties logging into Adobe Connect. Yeah, there is another platform like WebX from Cisco, which seems to be working fine in your country.

Now, when we went to our technical team and they asked us this question, they said that the functionality and facilities that the community requests from us – so, if you look at an Adobe Connect room within an ICANN meeting, for example, you'll find a place for presentation, a place for videos, a place for

transcribing, a place for translation, a place for audio and maybe a chat box.

Now, all these functionalities combined are available on Adobe Connect, but they are not necessarily found on WebX. That is why we had to move to Adobe Connect. It's really more of a community request that we need all these services. Adobe Connect was really the best option my colleagues found. But, definitely we will rerun this again with my colleagues at the technical team and see if anything has changed in this regard.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We actually have ended now officially, unless there's – I'm told we can take a couple of more questions, so please.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's not a question. We had this situation with ITU. But ITU did something that they hosted I think the Adobe in Geneva so we could connect to Adobe with ITU. They solved it to us.

WALID ALSAQUAF: Final remark before closing?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: [inaudible] from Iraq. Regarding the training, the [inaudible] will be also support by Arabic language because you know the language barrier may be for Arabic people.

WALID ALSAQUAF: Okay. In terms of supporting workshops and capacity development in Arabic, when Baher and myself do engagement in the region, we do ask the entities that we are talking to, “Would you like us to present or talk in English or Arabic?” And they give us an answer.

When it comes to technical training, one platform that I can really think of is to actually utilize our train the trainers to actually translate such content and deliver it in Arabic.

Of course, we assume they’ll probably be circulating to ccTLDs in the region what are their training needs, and of course maybe we can include in that the language part.

Frankly speaking, if there are volunteers who are willing to translate any content we receive in Arabic, that would really be helpful because at the end of the day all this technical jargon is best translated by locals or by technical people who understand the technical aspects.

But yes, we can work with those who ask for training in Arabic. But again, the technical jargon in Arabic is not very well defined.

Sometimes even a good trainer who can actually deliver such workshops in Arabic would find difficulties finding some terms to be used in Arabic like routers and switches and stuff like that.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: A mix is okay between Arabic and technical things.

WALID ALSAQUAF: I appreciate it. Thank you, everyone, for making it. I apologize for this. We had very limited time. But we do have an opportunity to have a group photo of all those who have joined us today. You're welcome to have a group photo later, but in the meantime, thank you very much for coming and I look forward to seeing you in future ICANN. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]