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SAN JUAN – RSSAC Organizational Review Session
Wednesday, March 14, 2018 – 13:30 to 15:00 AST
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LYMAN CHAPIN: …Server System Advisory Committee, the RSSAC. I have to keep reminding myself to expand the acronyms for people who don't necessarily know exactly what the letters, RSSAC, mean. But I suspect that most of the people who are going to be in the room today, that's not going to be an issue.

My name's Lyman Chapin. Our team of independent examiners for the review included my inter-aisle colleague, Colin Strutt and Jim Reid. They're not here today, but they are listening to the audio, obviously not watching the Adobe Connect which nobody is. So, what I'm hoping to do is I will run through the slides relatively quickly. Feel free to stop me at any point if you have a question that's relevant to a particular point that's made on one of the slides, but my intention is for there to be a considerable amount of time afterwards to have a Q&A session and to go into more detail on some of the findings.

This presentation will cover only the eight findings that we have pulled out and identified as principle findings. They're listed in the exec summary of the report and the report itself contains somewhere between 55 and 60 – I'm not sure where we actually

ended up – individual findings, and all of the material in the report will be input to the process of determining what will eventually be a set of recommendations so I encourage everyone who is here listening to this to read the actual report. Carlos, go ahead and pull the next slide.

So a quick update of where we stand. We began this in September last year. It actually got underway in a major way in October when we did our interviews at ICANN60 in Abu Dhabi and the assessment report that is the subject of today's session was published on the 27th of February. The URL is up there. I think probably most of you will have seen the announcement.

And this reflects a process that MSSI has fairly recently adopted for doing organizational reviews, which is to divide them into two distinct phases. The first phase is an assessment phase in which the idea is not to anticipate what recommendations might be made but simply to report on what the independent examiner found after conducting interviews, and surveys, and document reviews, and so forth.

So what we're doing today is presenting those findings. Findings are not recommendations and it's very important we make this point fairly strongly in the report. But as you go through the report and you're looking at the findings, it's very important to recognize that there's a second phase that still remains to be

done, which is working from the findings, to come up with a set of recommendations. And the draft of a final report containing both the findings and the recommendations will be available for a formal public comment period at the end of April and we expect, pending the outcome of that public comment period of course, that a final, final report will be published sometime early in July of 2018. Next slide.

So before we get into the substance of the findings, I wanted to, unfortunately, this slide is covered with acronyms and there is no room on the slide to expand on all of them. But again, I trust that most of you know what all these things mean.

The point of putting this up here is to emphasize that the organizational review that we're conducting as the independent examiner is a review of the Root Server System Advisory Committee. It's not a review of the Root Server Operators over on the left. It's not a review of anything other than the RSSAC itself.

And that's important to keep in mind as you go through the assessment report. It's obviously going to be important when we get to recommendations because in many cases, although the RSSAC's scope clearly covers a lot of issues that are also of concern to Root Server Operators, RSSAC is not an association of Root Server Operators.

And as I look around the room, I'm obviously, that's preaching to the choir for the most part here. But I think it's important. Whenever I talk about this, I make a point of emphasizing that because as we'll see later on, it's a point that is frequently lost when people look at what RSSAC is doing and think about what RSSAC should be doing. So go to the next slide.

So this is the standard format or the standard set of high-level purposes for all of the organizational reviews that are managed by MSSI on behalf of ICANN. Whether the group has a continuing purpose, if so, whether any changes are necessary, and whether it's accountable. And because we are now at the point where all of the ICANN structures have had at least one review, we've added to that something that's not in the bylaws as a mandate per se, but added to that an assessment of how effective the improvements that presumably resulted from the previous review have been.

In this case, the previous review was done by Westlake Consulting in 2008 and 2009. And the improvements resulting from that review were developed over a period of about three years culminating in late 2013 in a set of recommendations from the board to change the bylaws to change the charter of the RSSAC. Go to the next slide.

So we're going to go through eight principle findings. The first one is probably the least surprising. Those of you who are familiar with the RSSAC know that it underwent a substantial reformation beginning with a new charter approved by the board in late 2013 and also new operating procedures, a creation of the RSSAC Caucus. And uniformly, across the board, probably the most powerful result of all the work that we did talking to people and doing surveys and so forth was a clear sense that before and after were dramatically different and that the operation of the group was dramatically better as a result of the reforms that began in 2013 and to a certain extent are still ongoing. Next slide.

The second finding is that the group has become more open, transparent and accessible. Minutes are published. The group certainly understands itself to be much more transparent and accessible. Almost nobody outside the group believes that, so if you step just outside of RSSAC and ask pretty much anyone else in the ICANN community or the Internet community that pays attention to this kind of thing, the perception is still dominated by the idea that it's closed, and secretive, and not transparent.

So a lot of what has been accomplished within the RSSAC to open things up and make information more widely available hasn't percolated out much beyond the perimeter of the organization itself. Next slide.

One of the things that has been very difficult to sort of figure out how to represent is, and the difficulty arises in part from how fundamental it is. If you, again, step outside of the RSSAC and imagine yourself as part of any other ICANN organization or constituency or even just simply the community of people who pay attention to names and root servers and so forth, RSSAC looks like the only thing standing. It's the only visible interface between ICANN and the Root Server Operators and what we found is that this makes it incredibly difficult to keep separate in people's minds, the Root Server Operators on the one hand and RSSAC on the other.

And we would have these conversations with people as we went about our work. People for the most part, thought we were just splitting hairs. They thought we were just being obtuse and we were trying to create a formal distinction. I said, "If the RSSAC doesn't represent the Root Server Operators, then who does ICANN talk to?" So this was a very fundamental, almost existential problem that we found is that because RSSAC is the only group there, pretty much everybody in ICANN assumes that RSSAC is the way to talk to the Root Server Operators and that RSSAC must represent ICANN's relationship with the RSOs and whatever responsibilities it has for the operation of the root servers. This one, we're going to come back to because it's a pretty fundamental one. Next slide.

And one of the things that makes it difficult for the RSSAC to actually function as what many people would like it to be, many people would like it to be this common ground on which the RSOs and ICANN can come together and share thoughts and ideas about the future of the root and so forth, but it's ability to do that, we found is – and I use the word "complicated" because it's definitely a complicated issue. There are a lot of people within the RSSAC who still actively distrust ICANN. If you think about the way in which the operators of the various roots received their mandate originally from John Postel, to many of those folks, ICANN itself looks like one of the threats that they promised Jon to resist. And that is a persistent legacy that is surprisingly difficult to get around, I guess is the right way to put it.

I'm trying to choose my words carefully here because this is one that is, as I said here, is a paradox because you have this group called RSSAC which is an Advisory Committee of the board of ICANN and among its members, you have people who continue to believe that ICANN is, in fact, part of the problem, not part of the solution to the future of the root system. Next slide.

In RSSAC, you have, again, not by charter but by decision codified in the operating procedures. You have a membership structure that limits voting membership to representatives, a representative and an alternate from each of the 12 Root Server

Operator organizations, and a finding is simply that by definition, that excludes participants who are not RSO reps and the different skills and perspectives that might come from organizations that are not operating root servers. That's neither a good or a bad thing and, in fact, it's a good example of something that is just a finding. That doesn't mean that, well, therefore, there must necessarily be a recommendation that membership be expanded. It's simply an observation that RSSAC as a group does not have access to skills and perspectives that might be contributed by people who are coming from organizations other than Root Server Operators. Next slide.

And again, this is something that we found was pervasive, mostly outside of RSSAC, but in other parts of the ICANN community that people looked to RSSAC as – and again, in part because it's the only group available to look at – but as the focal point for pretty much anything that was considered to be an interest, legitimate or otherwise, that ICANN might have in the operation of the Root Server System.

So the wording here is "focal point for issues of mutual concern to ICANN and the RSOs and that includes future operational and funding scenarios for serving the root." Again, it's a tricky trade-off because on the one hand, ICANN has a limited scope of responsibility for what goes on in the Root Server System. It is, on the one hand, essentially the provisioning side of the registry

for the root zone, and therefore, it has an obvious interest in the way in which the root zone is served. But it does not have any operational responsibility for serving the root. And again, very few people outside of this room probably, very few people in ICANN fully understand what that means.

So a lot of people either don't know that the RSSAC is, in fact, working on root service evolution or they believe that its focus is misdirected. And by that, I mean that there are quite a few people who are enamored of alternative models for serving the root who think that RSSAC is basically just spinning its wheels, thinking about the details of how to do ads, and drops, and removes, and so forth for root servers when in their mind, the future of serving the root is something very different.

When you dig into that a lot, it tends to be a fairly simplistic level of understanding of what it means to actually serve the root in different ways. But I think that if you just found a reasonably well-informed ICANN person, it's highly unlikely that they would even know that RSSAC is dealing with some of these issues. Next slide.

And going back to the set of sort of canonical responsibilities of an organizational review like this, it has to do with determining whether or not the group is sufficiently accountable to its stakeholders. And RSSAC members, much less people outside of

the group, don't agree on who RSSAC's stakeholders should be and so it was very difficult for us to do much of anything useful about trying to determine for what and to whom RSSAC should be accountable because we were not able to establish a consistent sense of who RSSAC's stakeholders should be.

Now to first order, it's pretty clear from the charter that RSSAC's stakeholders are the ICANN Board and the ICANN community. It doesn't say that in so many words, but it's clearly implied. But the members of the group itself don't agree on what that means in practice and that's why we end up with a finding like this. Next slide.

And this is probably understandable. We have several new committees. The caucus is not all that new. It was formed as a result of the reforms in 2004. But we have a new Root Zone Evolution Review Committee and what we found was that possibly because there hasn't been enough communication about what the roles and responsibilities of these groups are, but they were frequently confused. We rarely found two people who agreed on what the division of responsibility for things having to do, for instance, with the security and stability of the root zone, what's the division of responsibility between at the SSAC and the RSSAC? And this is independent of whether or not these roles and responsibilities are clearly written down somewhere. For the most part, they are.

So if the only question were, do the definitions exist and are they clear, then we wouldn't have an issue at all. But almost nobody understands that. Almost nobody knows that. And so, even people who are members of some of these groups couldn't give us a clear answer as to how to distinguish the role of the group that they were a part of from the roles of some of these other groups. That's the last of the eight findings. We can go on to the next slide with next steps.

Before we do next steps, I think it will probably be appropriate to go ahead and go back and we can take questions on any of the findings or on anything else that you found in the report. I'm hoping that some people actually read the entire report because there's obviously a lot more in it than just these eight principle findings. And then we'll come back to next steps.

So Tripti, do you want to manage questions? I mean, I'm happy to. I just can't see behind me. So if people are raising their hand back there, I'm not going to be able to.

TRIPTI SINHA: Questions for Lyman? I don't see any.

LYMAN CHAPIN: Okay, then I can go on to next steps.

The public consultation will conclude, I think it's March 24th. Jennifer, do you know the date?

JENNIFER: [Inaudible].

LYMAN CHAPIN: 21st?

JENNIFER: 23rd.

LYMAN CHAPIN: The 23rd, okay. Encourage everyone, RSSAC members, other folks and so forth to send comments. You can send them directly to us as the independent examiner at the address up there. The MSSI folks also have an e-mail address that has been publicized for comments. Because this is not a formal ICANN public comment period – it's a public consultation – we're not going to do the usual thing of having a site where all the comments are posted, and responses. That'll come later. But I would definitely like to hear from anybody who has a reaction to the findings.

What we're going to be doing between now and through April is, as the examiner, is developing recommendations and there will be some more back and forth between us, our team, and the

RSSAC Review Work Party as we develop recommendations. The recommendations will then become, if you've seen the report, it has Part 1 which is introductory stuff, Part 2 which is the findings, and then there will be a Part 3 which will be recommendations and that will constitute the final report.

And as I said, we expect to have that available for a formal ICANN public comment period at the end of April and then a final report that will be ready for publication in early July of 2018.

I don't believe there are any explicit plans for a review session like this at ICANN62 but if the MSSI folks have a sense of whether that's going to happen or not, it would certainly be possible. And I think that's the last slide.

Yes. Okay, so that's all I have. Again, I'm happy to take questions or I'm happy to give you back an hour of your time.

TRIPTI SINHA: Any other questions for Lyman? Hearing none, Lyman, thank you very much.

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