

BARCELONA – Middle East Space - Applicant Support Program for the new gTLD Subsequent Procedure
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NADIRA AL-ARAJ:

Hello, everybody. [Speaking Arabic] not relevant to the Middle East. It would be relevant to all the communities all over the globe. So, I don't know if you have everybody's statement, you've got the statement, because the statement which we have today ... Before staff reads the statement, let me start.

If you are not familiar with the name, today the session is Middle Eastern Space. The space concept is not only for the Middle East, [inaudible] regional spaces. These regional spaces is formed by interested community to discuss about the different policies – ICANN policies – and how it reflects into their respective region. And thanks to Tijani, because he initiated and guided us into the Middle Eastern space, I think we are assembling for the third time with relevant statements that we will be passing. The statement is about the application support for the new gTLD subsequent procedure.

Let me also give some background to who are not familiar because I could see some new faces, so bear with us a little bit of background around the new gTLD subsequent procedures. Maybe earlier there is the ccTLDs, then we have the gTLDs. We are limited numbers. You are familiar is dot-edu, dot-gov, but in year 2012 they opened up for a new round and opened up not just only for three characters, beyond

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characters. So, many new gTLDs were delegated and functioning. Maybe you are familiar with, for example, dot-london, dot-amazon. There is dot-arab as well.

So, these new gTLDs, now after being implemented in the year 2012, many issues have been raised. So, in preparation for the new round, many committees are formed to discuss the issues and prepare in the preparation for the new gTLD subsequent procedures.

So, this is part segment of the new gTLD subsequent procedures, some segment that which we [handle] about application and it's for community application. That's our statement. That will be our statement for what we will be discussing today.

Just to distinguish between why it's only for community, because it could be somebody applying for dot-refugee as community or dot ethnic group, for example. Well, dot-[inaudible], dot-[berber]. These are what we are handling in our statement.

So, with this introduction, I would like to leave the floor now, opening this session with our colleague, Mr. Baher Esmat. He is Vice President of the Middle Eastern Stakeholder Engagement.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you, Nadira. Good morning, everyone. Welcome to ICANN 63 and welcome to the Middle East space. First, I'd like to note that we have interpretation in three languages: English, French, and Arabic. So, please feel free to speak the language of your choice and comfort.

Secondly, I just want to take a step back and just for those who are not familiar with the space and why you're here today, the idea of the Middle East space came around before the ICANN 60 meeting Abu Dhabi last year. It was not a new idea. It's something that has been implemented in other regions. Asia-Pacific, they used to have the APAC space for some time. LAC, Latin America and Caribbean. They also have their own space.

The idea is to provide the community with space at ICANN meetings to discuss ICANN-related issues of importance to the region. Not only to discuss but also to put their opinions on paper and make sure that those opinions are available to the community At-Large but also decision-makers at ICANN, the board, etc.

So, at ICANN Abu Dhabi ... Yeah. The other point is about the set-up. It's a community and this is key. There is a group of community members who work on this statement or issue months before the ICANN meeting. They start with a public poll to seek input from community on topics to be discussion, and based on that input, one topic is selected and then another group is put together to discuss and then state the opinions around this topic as a draft statement. This is the statement you have in front of you today online as well as printed out here.

Then, the community would gather here to discuss the statement, take further input and finalize it. Then, after that, the statement would be posted. There might be different ways of posting it. It could be submitted as a public comment. If there is a process for public comments available, it could be sent directly to the group, working

group, leading on this topic at ICANN. It could be sent to the ICANN board and so forth.

So, it's again up to the community and the group that is leading this and we have them around the table today to take the opinions stated here and make sure that the statement is finalized in due time and made available to the relevant parties.

In Abu Dhabi, the topic that was selected back then was about ICANN jurisdiction. It was a timely and hot topic back then. In Puerto Rico, it was about GDPR. Then today, the third Middle East forum, the topic is around the applicant support program with new gTLDs.

Of course, the new gTLDs is one of the key programs at ICANN. The previous round was launched back in 2012-2013, but again, the preparation work for this round had started years before that.

One of the considerations in the new gTLD rounds is developing a least developed economy and how to ensure that stakeholders and interested parties in those economies a) are aware of the program b) are also aware of opportunities for TLDs that might be relevant to their communities and geographies and c) that there is a process like the Applicant Support Program that would provide support to those stakeholders in those economies. And not only financial support, but also technical support, professional support in terms of helping applicants with putting together their applications, understanding the process, and so forth.

So, I'm glad that the Middle East community is raising awareness about this process early enough because the work of the subsequent round of gTLDs, the policy work is still underway. Nothing has been finalized yet, so I think time is very suitable for the Middle East community to bring up any issues or opinions and make sure that those opinions are shared widely across the community. Making your voice heard in any ICANN-related process is key for proper and active engagement. So, once again, thank you very much for being here with us. I'd like also to thank the group that has worked on this process.

Tijani and Nadira and Hadia. I know there are others who are not present here with us in Barcelona. Maybe some of them are online. I'd like to thank them all for their work. Thank you.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ:

Thank you, Baher. We were expecting to have Cherine Chalaby with us but unfortunately he is unable. He is the chair of ICANN board. But he's still with us through his letter. Tijani will be reading his e-mail.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Thank you, Nadira. Cherine sent me a message that he wants me to share with you:

“Dear Tijani, I hope you can share this message with the attendees of your Middle East space meeting in Barcelona. I sincerely hoped to be with you today, but scheduling and prior commitments have kept me away.

“You know that this is an important group for me and I very much enjoyed our time over recent meetings in Puerto Rico, Abu Dhabi, and the Middle East DNS Forum in Cairo.

“I’d like to extend a special thanks to everyone with you today for all your efforts. I encourage you to please continue doing what you are doing. I wish you the best of success at the Middle East space as you tackle [inaudible] issues facing ICANN and look forward to meeting with you in the future. Best regards, Cherine Chalaby, Chair ICANN Board.”

NADIRA AL-ARAJ:

Thank you, Tijani. Next, to give you a background about the subsequent procedures with regard to the work track, we have kindly, Christa, it’s a pleasure to have you here. Christa Taylor, she will be co-chair of this group and she will be giving you a background.

CHRISTA TAYLOR:

Good afternoon. Or, I guess it’s good morning here. I was part of work track one and we discussed applicant support at a pretty in-depth level. I think one of the ... Well, giving a little bit of history, there were three applicants in the 2012 round. Only one was successful going forward. And in the discussions with work track one, a lot of it surrounded of how do we make sure that the stringency and the gaming that we were trying to prevent in the first round prevented so many applications that we could say that perhaps the applicant support was not successful in its outreach. So, what can we do differently in the next round?

So, the working group came up with a whole bunch of ideas and some suggestions. I think a lot of it is covered in your letter, but just to give you some discussions that happened within the work group, we spent a lot of time on the stringency that was applied to make sure that we weren't so stringent in the future, but we need to balance it to make sure that it doesn't become an item that can be gamed.

So, one of the items in there was, in the 2012 round, if you applied for it and you were determined that you might be gaming the system, it was game over for you. Your application was completely removed.

So, in the working group, we discussed it at length and it was, no, you shouldn't be completely removed. You should be able to pay the difference in amount and still move forward. So, that was one of the items that came up in the working group and you'll see it in I think a lot of the questions.

The other aspect of it, which we also addressed was to going beyond just the application fee. In the first round, the applicant support would pay 25% of the application amount. What it would be on the next round is yet to be determined because we don't expect that it would still be the \$185,000. Is it still the 25%? We don't know at this point.

But, going beyond just an application, who can support it? Who can provide the background, the training? It goes beyond into the legal parts of it. Who has the expertise to train the people to make sure that you have the registrars on board to ensure that the applicant becomes successful when they do launch?

So, there were a whole bunch of items that were discussed at length. I guess one of the big things that comes out of the working group is we still don't have a solution on what that would look like going forward. Who is the right parties to outreach to? What is the most efficient manner to do that? And any ideas along that would be appreciated, because even though we discussed this for months, or I guess almost a year now – or maybe more than that, yikes! No one has any real concrete ideas on the best outreach program, that we are really efficient in reaching the right people and providing with the right resources. So, just a bit of background. I'm happy to help or answer any questions.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ:

Thank you. So, [inaudible] the mechanism of such a recommendation. It needs to be worked out, it seems. Now we are moving to the statement itself. Then, after that, we will have ... I'm not sure about that [approach] but I'm thinking to have open first the statement be read, questions about this, to be more clarification. Then, we start providing comments. Let's first read it. Tijani will be reading it for us. The second step to [question] about the different concepts and the ideas in here to have more elaborate understanding. The third, we will be providing comments about what we can edit in this final draft. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone, and thank you for coming. Since we have interpretation, let's make use of it. I will speak

in Arabic, knowing that most of what I will say will be a mixture of Arabic and English since the acronym and all those concepts are more English than another language.

Good morning, again. Thank you very much for coming and thank you for your participation. At the outset, I would like to thank Nick Tomaso who is sitting with us. He is the head of ICANN Istanbul and this office is serving Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. As he is in charge of the office that is serving us, people in the Middle East. Thank you, again, Nick. Thank you for coming and joining us and thank you for your support.

Now, I will go back to the statement and I will apologize to Nadira. I [was] not reading it because you have it and you can read it yourself, so I will present the statement and give you some background as my colleague, Christa, also mentions. I think that would be more beneficial at the end of the day.

So, in 2012 – and let me go back here. No, actually, in 2007, there was a dire need to have a new DNS space for new gTLDs, so ICANN conducted a study about new gTLDs and new gTLDs and this study took many years and a lot of money. That was a huge dilemma. I will explain why later.

After conducting the study, we saw this guidebook of eight versions. One after the other. And from version one, the fees to get a gTLD is about \$185,000. I am among many – actually, many people – and also some of the governments as well and from the civil society. Others also,

especially when we talk about the countries of [the south], they said this is really expensive. So, you design a program for the rich people, the country. So, the countries in our region will not be able to receive that. There was a huge resistance.

So, the second applicant book was the same. We notice the same fees. [Until the eighth] version, we notice the same fees. Always we hear the same pretext, that as follows. From the day we started our studies, there was a decision made that we have to cover the expenses here because everything we spend on the study has to be covered by the applicant fees and they were convinced, based on their studies, that they will receive 500 applications.

So, the expenditures and five applicants, based on that, they came to this number, \$105,000. They were trying, of course. There was an attempt to reduce the fees, so the board came with a famous resolution #20 in Nairobi asking the community to create a working group to study how we can help the applicants of new gTLDs who need help and provide this help to the applicants to operate the registries. Hence, this time we were [exerting] lobbying to decrease the fees. In the community, there are ...

On the other hand, there now was another camp resisting reducing the fees. They said, “Why? Why should we reduce the fees?” So, those group who are against the reduction of the fees, actually they are the first ones who signed on the working group. In the working group, you have different views. Again, there were people supporting this trend and others against it. I was a member at this working group, and during our

work, again under this group, there was always this [inaudible] that the program will offer, will not be transparent. In other words, maybe abused by some people who don't need any help financially speaking at the end of the day. And they would say no based on keeping the criteria flexible.

So, at the end of the day, we put a very rigid set of criteria and a very rigid conditions – so, terms – to avoid any abuse to the system and will not fulfill the criteria. Again, we were very careful to put a set of very rigid criteria here. There was a term here. If there is one applicant who will not respond to one of the terms, he will not be eligible for the support and not even to continue the application process, even if he came up with the money.

So, hence, at the end of the day, there were only three applicants who were successful to get in the applications. The program, this program, didn't have any outreach policy in underserved regions. They were focusing on the northern parts, and for the southern parts, they said, "No, we can do the application process online. How?" And those are underserved regions, so there we witnessed a huge failure here because even people didn't know. Some of the people didn't know about the program, the new gTLD program. And even if they heard about it, they didn't know that there's a program that could support them financially. There are people, again, who are serious to apply and they need some support. Again, they didn't hear about this program.

So, we only [witnessed] three applicants. Two of them would not be able to succeed in the application process. One left, but he also wasn't

able to complete the application process because, based on the community application board, you need to pass your application through a board and the board said, no, that is not part of the community here. We have our own opinion on that issue, but that is not the time or place to discuss it. So, the end result was zero. We conducted meetings, more than one a year, and we've started ample efforts but the results were zero here.

Why I'm sharing this with you, to avoid this in the future. Let me go back to the content of the statement. I gave you an idea about the support to the applicants. It's very important in the underserved regions, not only in our region as well. We have to be very clear here. We don't talk about regions here and communities. There are communities in the United States who are considered to be poor communities or underserved communities, like Native American communities. In other words, there are communities in need of support and they need new gTLDs because it is how they present their identity online.

We looked into the system, and as I told you, it was a failure of the system back in 2012. It was a problem. In addition, now we know why, because we had a very rigid set of criteria. There wasn't enough outreach as well. We said, for future success, the support should not be only in financially, but we support in different kinds, like the fees of application writing. I mean, different kinds of support, and the most important for me is the pre-application support, because if you don't provide a pre-support application, the applicant will not be able to submit his or her application.

The mentorship as well is very important. We also discussed, as Christa mentioned, if there is an applicant who will not fulfill the criteria, it doesn't mean that he will be gaming, but I'm talking about the applicant who will not be able to – he is not trying to game here. He's not seeking gaming, but again, the process is very rigid. So, how the applicant will fulfill the process. So, anyone who will fulfill the application criteria, he has to have a priority in terms of contention as well, if there is a contention in regards to a string. So, if he overcomes this, that means that he will be able to serve community, hence we must provide him with a priority here.

And going back to gaming, if this person would be prohibiting to join the system and will not accept as well to apply for any future string in the future, we can decide on the periods, especially if the election will be based on one open round, first come, first served, for example.

Because there are two choices here, [inaudible] rely on sequent rounds as in the past. For example, we can find him by not offering him to submit his application for two rounds, for example.

After 2012, there was a feeling in the community, to overcome the problems, we have to dedicate one round to focus on the underserved communities and regions. That was not acceptable by everyone, but I personally said why not? Let's dedicate ourselves for one round and to see whether or not it will be beneficial.

Finally, we said that the lack of success of the application system in 2012 could not be a pretext for us to continue our efforts to provide our

support to whoever is eligible for the help to be able to receive his string because he also, to support diversity and to serve the public interest as well. So, obviously, that could be helpful.

Whether the interest ... Sometimes, you witness several interests. You may see applicants who are seeking political interest, etc. But, no. We should focus on the applicants who have or would like to serve a community interest and I hope that I was able to explain to you as much as possible the idea behind the statement.

[NADIRA AL-ARAJ]:

Now, should I speak in Arabic or in English? Okay, I will speak in Arabic. I will speak in Arabic.

Of course, I support this statement. Me and others also shared the statement. The one thing that I'm not 100% sure of, although I know that Christa mentioned it, the part that is about if there is an applicant who doesn't succeed in the application process. It's not gaming here. I'm not talking about gaming. He has or she has the right to apply using the regular track. The reason for that, I'm saying that this is not something positive. If the applicant can, from the outset, apply for a bank loan, why he would go and compete with others who have no other ways or means to get a gTLD. Why? Why he will compete with those other people who don't have any other means?

On the other hand, that will open the door for people who really don't need that support. And if they were successful in their application

process, will take the places of the other people who deserve the support.

So, what I'm trying to say here, that of course we have to provide ample support to the applicants in terms of the community, to the community registries, and this support has to be provided before going [into] the application in terms of how to fulfill the criteria. I mean, we'd say some of the applicants who will not be successful at this track, he will have another opportunity through what we call the regular track.

As you know, applicants, they are coming with different capabilities. So, how we can bring competitiveness between the different people here.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

What do you think about what Hadia said?

[MOHAMED]:

As far as what Hadia said, I agree and I disagree at the same time. I agree because the objective of the process, it will decide whether I'm eligible or not. Not my own needs. You put a process so that you make sure that I need. And if I fail, it means I don't need the support, then, in this case. So, it's my right to go and apply and it's your right to evaluate my case. So, if my case is incorrect, you cannot deny me to apply from the normal path.

What Mr. Tijani said before, the things that are not commercial and not political that can make the community need gTLDs, what are – give me

an example. I don't see the entire history, but it's a very interesting idea and I like it, the idea of supporting. But give me an actual example.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Thank you very much. Assume for example that you have a community. Let's say the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. The Tamil have their own language. It's their own culture. They want their own culture. They want to put this on the Internet. They want to have the world know about them. And this gTLD will serve the culture, the language. It's not a commercial purpose and it's not a political purpose. It's not a country. It's a community.

For example, also, let's look at the Amazigh, the Berbers of North Africa. They don't have a country. They are spread through different countries. They would like their culture and their language to be preserved and to be given an identity on the Internet. That's one of the things that the community will benefit from.

For example, my own personal experience. I am an executive director for the Internet Society, the Federal Internet Society, and the first thing we wanted is to have a TLD called dot-net as far as the Mediterranean area but we don't have the money. Secondly, the competition was coming from the doctors and the pharmaceuticals who have the money, have the backup. We couldn't. We could not compete with them. Therefore, we did not even apply.

These are different kinds of interests that we are there that have nothing to do with politics, nothing to do with [inaudible].

ALI ALMESHAL:

Thank you, Tijani. I see that the criteria that Tijani mentioned, one of them assumes that they have the right to apply and get the support. There is one point here. The statement that was we're mentioning is to serve the underserved countries, right? So, therefore, the bigger segment in those areas, that's what we would like to support, and why they are not applying, it's the same points that you've mentioned. So, if we put the criteria in a way where it's not commercial or political or economic, this issue of commercial interests, most of the projects and most of the ideas at the end, there is usually something financial to be gained out of it.

So, when you are denying the other segments to apply based on those conditions and criteria, you are not serving the community. You're not serving the society. You are trying to maybe put – you should put some restriction as far as not being political, but it's fine. But to put it non-commercial is not really serving the community.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

They are going to take money from the registry. When I say non-commercial, it doesn't mean it doesn't take money, but the objective is not the gain. Of course, he has to have money to be able to function his registry to operate, but it has to be a non-profit. It's not to gain more. It is to serve the community. This is the bracket where he is supposed to be, so that I'll be fair, so that I don't give a chance to some people more than others.

ALI ALMESHAL: Yes, Tijani, I agree. But the statement needs a little bit of clarification. You are trying to help the segment that is incapable to be served by those countries maybe in the Arab world. Thank you.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: There is one point I do not understand [brother], Ali. You are talking that maybe commercial registry can apply for support. Is that what is causing a problem? If they are commercial, this is prepared for the underdeveloped regions.

Sorry, switching to English. Christa, especially because she mentioned that the application only for financial support. But I feel the importance of one of the mechanisms is just more understanding about the process of the application, the legal support, how they're forming. And instead of allocating this budget, they can provide a consultant with this money to provide the service.

CHRISTA TAYLOR: Yeah. So, just to give you a bit of background, a lot of people wanted to make sure that people had enough runway to really understand what the program was. They felt that the outreach that was initially done didn't provide enough depth and enough understanding for those regions and that they might have even ... Didn't even have the basics in place to even go beyond into applying for a new gTLD.

For instance, we called it the middle applicant in the end because they needed to have certain basics in their life so that they could go and move forward with the Internet. So, if they don't have food and water, obviously the Internet and expanding out isn't their first priority. So, they called it the middle applicant. And to be able to provide them with the right kind of support so they both understood it, the process to make sure they had all the resources there, so that if they wanted to move forward, they did have that there.

There was a lot of discussion on the legal part of it because the legal expense can far outweigh the application fee of \$185,000.

So, we did have all these volunteers in the first round. You could sign up and say, "I want to volunteer to help out applicant support. But, it unfortunately, came at a really late time in the program. It wasn't really used at that time. So, this time, it was we want to – well, the comment so far is we want to make sure everyone has the right resources, that we've done a really great outreach program to all the right regions to make sure that they have enough information to both understand it from a whole bunch of different angles, as well as have all the advisors there, so that if they do move forward, that they have everything in place to be successful. Sorry if I didn't clarify that well enough.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

So, I actually understand what Ali is trying to say. I don't necessarily support what he is saying and maybe what he's saying is this is not [inaudible] place. However, he is raising a very important point. He is basically talking about the domain name industry in our region, in underserved countries.

Here comes the problem. You really don't have any registries coming from – you have very few registries coming from Africa or the Middle East. This is because they cannot afford paying for that, and because the industry hasn't yet picked up in our region, the money that they will pay definitely they won't be able to have a return on their investment out of it.

So, this is an interesting point. How do we encourage actually the industry in the region? How do we encourage having more registries from the region? I don't know. Maybe through supporting them in the beginning and maybe they can try paying back after they start making some money. I don't know, but I think this is something that we need to think about. Thank you.

ALI ALMESHAL:

Okay. Looking to the statement, the title of it is about the application support, but going into the content of it, I understand a bigger problem which [inaudible] highlighted from my speeches. It's written in the application as well, that only three applicants received in the first round, which is this is something bigger than the support. So, I guess

we are having two points here. Either we want to discuss it here or we just focus on the applicant support.

But, the high-level point is why we don't have applicants from the region. Is it because of the support? If it is the support, then we have to review our criteria. If it is not the support, then as you mentioned, Tijani, at the beginning, maybe there was no outreach, there was no awareness.

So, two steps here. First of all, we need to encourage people to apply for applicants. And if they are not interested, we need to know why and how we can encourage them.

Then, the other point, whom we should give support if they need and what is the criteria of the support. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Thank you very much, Ali. In fact, the three applications were applications for support. I am speaking about the application support program. We received only three applications for support.

As for the applications from the region – for example, Middle East region – we received very few and we wrote it here. Why those applications were, especially from the [gulf], because people who did this application are aware. They are mostly western companies or expat experts. You understand?

So, the outreach in the region wasn't there. Why they applied? Because they are aware. They came from the north. You understand? That's why we put that.

So, why we don't have enough applications from our regions. Yes, we know why. There is a lot of things. Support is one, but it's not the only one. There is the [inaudible] also. There is also the business case. Let's tell it clearly. There is a business case. So, a lot of things that make our regions not entering in this industry. One of them is the support.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

May I further? We do mention about outreach and awareness and also there is another statement, a request of outreach and a statement. This is part of the request. We are asking for the application support program. We also have doing the visibility studies for the applicant. If they were to do testing the market before – their market for the community before launching their application.

CHRISTA TAYLOR:

One other aspect to consider is the amount of registrars in the area. I think that's a critical way that you're going to sell all these domains. And if you don't have those resources in place, it makes it really difficult for any new registry to be successful, because they don't have an avenue to sell it.

Procedure

HADIA ELMINIAWI: So, in 2014, out of 1,010 ICANN accredited registrars, we had I think 14 from Africa and 7 from the Middle East. So, yeah. I would say the industry doesn't really exist.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much. I think it is related. If you don't have registries, why having a registrar? You will not sell domains from the north. They have a lot of registrars and very powerful registrars. So, it is related.

I think that not having – if we have new registries and new gTLDs, you will have new registrars because it is a business. It is a market. But we don't have it. This is the problem.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thank you, Tijani. You have really explained the situation in the Middle East and for this issue of new gTLDs, we are struggling already with our ccTLDs which we had [for free]. So, how do you expect with the gTLDs and new gTLDs in the region? It's all the time a business case. It's a business case and business model that we have to build with the ccTLDs and TLDs new gTLDs.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you. Just very quickly reacting to the discussion about industry registries, registrars, etc. I think it would also be important for those who are interested in considering an application through the next round is to study carefully not only the market, but also lessons learned from the previous rounds.

We are aware of some registries in the region that are struggling. We are aware of some registrars in the region who are not necessarily struggling but they also have different business models. Some are focusing on certain markets. Some do have presence in the region, and actually their market is entirely outside the region. They have presence in the region for legal reasons or whatever reasons.

So, I think the numbers are not enough to say that we have X number of registries or registrars, then there is [inaudible] or there is a challenge. I think that alone is not sufficient. But I think a sort of study or sort of deep understanding of this ecosystem is very important. And we have examples that we are aware of whether in Africa or the Middle East of registries and registrars. I'm sure that some of you have access to them.

So, I think part of the awareness that community will do, and perhaps ICANN Org will also do, is to try to look at those examples and see what the lessons that could be learned. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Thank you very much, Baher. I don't agree 100% with that. That's right. I am sure that you have problems to sell your domains, your domain names, even if they are for free in Tunisia [and the] ccTLDs. But can you explain me why Tunisians are buying domains under dot-com, dot-org, etc.? This is a problem of marketing. This is a problem of how to – a business model of how to address, how to get people, how to make people buy your domains. So, there is a problem and I know it is a multi-dimensional problem. It's something that, like Baher said, it is

something that we have to address in a cool way and taking the time to address all the aspects of the problem. Otherwise, we will always be in the same situation.

Coming back to our statement because now we are not discussing our statement. Coming back to our statement, I can say that [accept] the remark of Ali about the commercial underserved regions applications and the point of Hadia regarding the non-successful applicant for support.

I can say that the statement is more or less accepted, so we will try together with Ali and Hadia to modify the statement so that it will address both points and so that it will reflect the opinion of everyone here in the room. Do you accept that? We still have time.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: Since we have time, I think we can suggest that modification here.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: We have a comment.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: Sorry, yes.

MOHAMMED YOUSIF: Thank you. I am Mohammed Yousif from Sudan. I am an ICANN fellow. I just would like more explanation on the point of the commercial

application because I think if someone wants a gTLD for commercial purpose, they already have the capital and have the financial ability to spend on the gTLD and on the profit. So, why would I support someone who is seeking profit from my application?

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Thank you. Thank you for this remark. To tell you the truth, on 2012, the Applicant Support Program was done for those people, too, because they say in these regions, even if you want to have a business, if you want to enter the DNS market, you cannot because you don't have the \$185,000. So, the Applicant Support Program was done for them, too. But with very tough criteria.

So, I understand this point and I ask everyone here in the room if this is something we can address, we can add, but add with a bit care so that we are not give the opportunity to people who don't need any support to apply and have it. Yes?

MOHAMMED YOUSIF:

May I just add something? It seems to me that the application process is divided into two parts. The first one is the procedural one and the second one is the financial one. So, ICANN supports you to go through the process of application but not give you the financial support. I don't mind giving financial support or [inaudible] procedural support to go through the process to all the applicants whether they are commercial or not, but my concern is about the financial support to those who are in a commercial part of the [inaudible]. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Mohammed, just to clarify here, there are some people in the region, like any region or your own country in Sudan. You know everything about the situation, the country, and what are the interests are you seeking behind buying a new gTLD. Is it going to be a personal interest or for your own country? But let's assume you don't have any financial capabilities. If you don't have even the support, the financial support, you will not be able to enter the DNS market. This is the idea, in general. As I shared with you, our program back in 2012 also we covered this. I'm trying just to share with you the whole idea behind what I'm saying.

Regarding the commercial use, personally I feel that it's mandatory to support even for people who are applying for the support and they are going to use the new gTLD for commercial because I believe as we would like to have a kind of balance in the DNS industry and trying to push the region, the Middle East region, to the global market – I mean, we have to have a footprint in that industry.

So, I believe a kind of our effort is to give them the support and the know-how and even bring the experiences from other countries to those commercially or companies that are planning or trying to get to the industry. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA:

Thank you, Hadia?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: So, I do understand what you're both saying and I don't necessarily disagree, but what would you say if someone says that you are introducing a sort of unfair competition? Other players might think this way. If you're supporting ... I don't know. How can we respond to this unfair competition?

I heard you saying something. I thought that might be something that we could include here. I don't know. You're saying basically that we could have two different kinds of supports. One is both the helping with everything before the application and during the – before submitting the application and then also the financial support.

Another kind of support could be not the financial support but other kinds of support. You are suggesting having two kinds of support. I don't know if ...

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Okay. Any other comment?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: I'm still trying to imbed in Ali's recommendation here. But just leaving it open because it's not determined in our statement, we are talking about underserved region. So, they could be any entity. It doesn't have to be a community.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: [inaudible]. We said in our statement that the string must be serving an underserved region or an underserved community. We didn't say that the applicant should be a community or a physical person. Please, Mohammed?

MOHAMMED YOUSIF: Well, I just have a comment on Hadia's viewpoint. Yes, I totally agree with you because you said that we could have like two kinds of supports. And regarding the fairness point, whether you are fair on this or not, I think we will have a criteria that if an applicant needs, we will give him the financial support and if they do not meet the criteria in this way or another, then they will not give them the financial support.

So, I think it is better to have these two ... And if we give commercial bodies, if we give them financial support, then I think the mission of this [inaudible] is targeting the underserved communities. So, those commercial bodies, I think they do not [inaudible]. But this is my viewpoint. You may agree or disagree with it. But I see it this way. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Mohamed, what we said in the statement, we said that the string ... To be eligible for support, the string must serve an underserved region or underserved community. We didn't say that the applicant should be a community or not a community. So, you may have someone ... As I said, you may want to apply for a TLD which will serve your community in

Sudan. You will earn money behind it. Yes, it is a commercial one. But it will be for your community. It will be something serving the community.

MOHAMMED YOUSIF: Can you modify the statement, not to be like underserved communities and underserved region to be, like, the deserving communities or deserving bodies or somebody who deserves this? Because now you open the statement to all the companies, big companies.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: I think this depends on how we define the underserved communities or the – I don't know. We should go back to the definition.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: And [inaudible] the criteria for eligibility will determine everything. This is the way how you prevent people who are not in need of support to have the support. It is the eligibility criteria.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: And it is not in here. It's in the program itself. The criteria, it's [inaudible]. Not in our statement.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: In closing, Christa?

BAHER ESMAT: So, reading some of the quick comments in the room. [inaudible] from Tunisia says, “Hi, all. I wanted to mention that with regard to the statement for support applicants from underserved regions, a point was raised in GAC yesterday and as first [inaudible] the proposal is welcome by the GAC.” Then, he continues to say, “We need that [inaudible] region. I would welcome following up the statement.”

[inaudible] says, “Totally agree with Hadia. I think that we have to focus on region or country where the DNS market is less developed, and not underserved one.”

[inaudible] from Pakistan says, “One of the points behind the low number is apparently the fee. Some of the speakers have already point it out. But yes, awareness and knowledge could be something that might result in more applications from the region in the future.”

Then, he goes on to say, “I think for the community/business and countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, etc. cost might not be the key hindrance, but understanding and awareness of the value chain when it comes to the domain name industry.”

Then, he goes on to say, “[inaudible] in that case, deserving [inaudible] necessarily reflect the region for which the statement is drafted because of the potential need for it. Thank you.”

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Just a correction to something I said earlier. I said that we have 14 ICANN accredited registrars from Africa. It’s vice-versa. In 2014, we had

14 ICANN accredited registrars from the Middle East and 7 from Africa. I said it the other way around. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Any other comment? May I say that we will try to work the statement in the way that we tried to address the concern of Hadia and Ali and Mohammed Yousif. With these three people, with Nadira trying to update the statement according to your concern, and in this case, we can consider that the statement is adopted.

Okay. So, I think it's okay. So, now, Nadira, you have to contact Ali, Hadia, and Mohammed Yousif to work the statement.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: To follow-up with you, a definite date?

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: No, before leaving. Before leaving Barcelona.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: Okay. I will follow-up with this. I need your contact, Mohammed Yousif.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: I just want to say that, for mostly, I do support the statement. I was part of it. My interventions are very minor.

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TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Let me please tell you that we have really to applaud and to thank Nadira for the huge work she did to have this statement made and the very important contribution of Hadia, of Manal, and Zakir but Zakir [inaudible]. Those three people who did this statement. This statement was done by them. I only assisted. I only assisted. So, thank you very much all. I hope that this space will continue to work. I will resign from leading it and I hope that we will have new blood so that, in the future, we will have more contribution, I hope. Thank you. [applause]

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: Thank you, Tijani. We will still be leading the [inaudible]. We still need your help, I think, your support.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Yes. I will be with you.

NADIRA AL-ARAJ: So, thank you for the comments and thank you for who took part and thanks for Tijani's effort in clarifying a lot of points. Without his clarification, this statement wouldn't be [inaudible] with this form. Thanks for you coming. We wish you also – you have a full contact with ICANN staff, so always be updated with what's happening and be engaged in future Middle Eastern space. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you.

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[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]