
ICANN68 | Virtual Policy Forum – APAC Space
Tuesday, June 23, 2020 – 10:00 to 11:30 MYT

SABRINA LIM:

Good morning, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us at the session of APAC space here at ICANN 68. My name is Sabrina. I'm from the Global Stakeholder Engagement team, and I'll be helping to take you through this next about one and a half hours.

Thank you so much for joining us. It is good to have you here in our little APAC space session in APAC time zone. Very warm welcome to everyone else who's dialing in from outside of the region. We thank you very much for joining us and welcome you here.

So today, we're going to have quite a power packed session. We're going to be examining a topic that's quite close to the hearts of a lot of people here and has been going on at ICANN 68. It's been talked about a lot, which is the impact of COVID-19 in APAC. Next slide, please.

So broadly today, this will be the agenda. we will have a number of speakers who'll be sharing their perspectives from their different stakeholder groups on the topic, and we'll also have a community discussion open sharing that will be facilitated by Pam for anyone who might want to share about their own experiences as well, what they see about the impact of COVID-19. So without further ado, may I invite Jia-Rong to come and open the session with his welcome remarks? Jia-Rong, please.

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JIA-RONG LOW:

Okay, Sabrina. Thanks, everyone, for taking the time to join us virtually for this APAC Space session. I'm Jia-Rong, the managing director of the ICANN Asia Pacific office based in Singapore, if you've not met me before. And with me, we have the whole team.

Unfortunately, we can't get to see each other, and also because of some of the Zoom bombing experiences from yesterday, today's format for the webinar has been changed. Usually, you get to see who else is on this call together with you at APAC Space, but unfortunately, due to the change in functioning, you're not able to do so. So we do apologize. Next slide, please.

Again, just a quick recap of what is APAC space. Essentially, APAC Space is literally a space for our Asia Pacific community members to get together and to network with one another to know one another. So in a way, the new format now kind of takes away the ability for us to do that, but let's try to have as interactive a session as possible still, because we have a good lineup of speakers from the region who'll be talking and hope that we can have some interaction and get to know the speakers better as well.

Essentially, APAC Space in terms of how often we do it, we do it every other month, either in a web conference format or face-to-face at ICANN meetings. But as you know, this time, the ICANN meeting is virtual so we can only do a virtual session.

APAC Space is also a practice ground, literally, for us to share our views and ideas. If you want to participate in the multi-stakeholder, bottom-up Internet governance model, we have to speak up. So

typically, for Asia Pacific community members, we tend to be shy and the whole idea of APAC space is for us to practice raising our voice and that we can share our views here in safe, familiar environment and take those views then to share back at the various PDP working groups, reviews, and participate in the larger ICANN work.

So we do cover a bunch of other topics, such as DNS industry topics, ICANN PDPs, as well as ICANN reviews during APAC space. But today, we have special topic, kind of a high interest topic since we are getting together and we only have this one opportunity to do so during ICANN 68 virtual meeting. So we have this high-interest topic for everyone to be able to talk about the recent impact of the COVID-19 situation and for us to just get to know how each other is doing.

So if you're not subscribed to APAC space yet, at the bottom of the screen, we have e-mail to write to to subscribe, and after that, you get to join the community discussions at discuss@apacspace.asia and more information about APAC Space at the weblink below, www.apacspace.asia. We put all the recordings of APAC Space as well as the [inaudible] discussions all on this link. So if there's anything, bookmark the link, then you get to see all the information for APAC Space there.

I think that wraps up my slide here, so I hand it over to Sabrina. Next slide, please.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you, Jia-Rong. Before we begin, wanted to just give a little shoutout to all our friends who are joining in this call, especially from Malaysia. Although we're not able to be in Kuala Lumpur this week, but we're very glad for the warm support and their being here. So if you don't mind, I'm going to turn the mic over very briefly to Professor Suhaidi Hassan who was originally leading the local host committee for what would have been ICANN 68 KL.

Professor Suhaidi, if you're not able to speaking right now, maybe we'll try and come back to you a little later if that's okay. We might be having some slight technical difficulties there. I apologize for that. So perhaps if we could move forward first, we could have our first speaker for this session. He is Hasnul Hasan, Chief Executive Officer from MYNIC, to share with us on his perspective coming from the technical or ccTLDs stakeholder group on our topic today. Hasnul, please.

HASNUL HASAN:

Hi everyone. I was invited into this session, so what is interesting, I've never really participated in a webinar in this manner. But it's really interesting how the pandemic is actually bringing us together with technology.

I'm just going to give you on how Malaysia actually deal with the COVID-19 case. When we started in March when the government actually decided to institute the movement control order, our team was thinking we were able to come to office, and suddenly we got

directives from our ministry saying that, no, everyone has to work home.

So it was quite surreal because we were thinking this is not going to be so serious and so long, and so on and so forth. So we went and found our BCP, business continuity plan, and dusted it off. We're looking at the case scenario for virus outbreak and all those things.

It was quite academic [when we said it.] For the first week we had to actually do a lot of tweaking in terms of how do we monitor, how do we check the team's availability, their health. So it's becoming a bit more detailed in that manner, and at the end of the day, actually, we feel that we improve our business continuity plan much better.

The interesting point also when we were going through all this situation for about three months is that we also seen an increase in domain name registration, and the government is also very helpful in terms of pushing or focusing their efforts on ramping up the adoption from offline to online.

As you all know, Malaysia has about 8 million registered businesses. For our size, we're going to be considered like we're an entrepreneur country because a lot of how people like to do business. So the adoption is still quite low. So what the government has seen is that even though we had been doing all these programs by various agencies and ministries to actually push the adoption, the pandemic itself actually causes us to realize and focus how all of this interconnectivities, the networks, the domains, the networks, the

commerce, the logistics, how all of these are interconnected in giving us that global digital economy.

So a lot of focus and also stimulus package are given to various agencies in order to accelerate it further so that from Malaysia's standpoint, we are focusing on helping the people to basically adopt it faster.

From a technical point of view, since basically a lot of the ccTLDs are actually doing from home because we are IT, it's not too bad per se in terms of when we talk about how do we actually work from home and so on. The only thing is there are certain things that can't be done at home. We saw an increase of productivity at home. So I asked my team why is that the case.

Some say maybe because when they're in the office, they like to socialize. So when they're at home, they're with their family so their focus is their job. It's an interesting notion that we are trying to actually do some survey to find out what actually is the reason behind that productivity.

Now, this is productivity related to business as usual. The ones that we have established and operationalized. The toughest challenge that we have is when we want to do new strategic initiative, we run into a bit of issue there. When we do it virtually, we feel from our point of view that it's not as effective. If it's a new initiative because when we want to do brainstorming, whiteboarding, we realize we didn't have the right tool. Using Zoom and all those things is not enough, so we were

exploring other solutions that can complement this virtual conferencing so that we can make it a real virtual office.

So, that's from me, Sabrina.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you, Hasnul. Thank you so much for that sharing. So if we could have our next speaker, it will be Dr. Ajay Data, also known as chair of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group and also managing director for Data Group to share his perspectives. Dr. Ajay, welcome.

AJAY DATA:

Hello. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, everyone. Great to connect virtually, though not able to see. I think the biggest thing which has come up is a contactless economy. As Hansul said right now, this [teleconomy,] I would say that we have moved into a contactless economy, contactless innovation. It's a pandemic situation where we do not have an end date, we do not know in which direction we are moving.

We have been working with government here very actively from 20th of March, and myself along with my team had worked almost 20 hours a day to create a fast solution, a virtual meeting solution, creating the ways how government can function during this time without meeting with the citizens, meeting with the people, how do we provide them medical aids, how do we ensure that the hospital beds are available online, which hospital to go, where to go for tests. All those things are

available and are getting not only as a service but also as an opportunity for many.

It is extremely important to understand for all of us, probably, that we are moving into a no end date kind of scenario where we do not know when we will have a physical ICANN. Nobody can tell that. When I have my next international travel for my customers, we don't know.

So ultimately, the contactless economy is taking shape. It is [taking built.] We have seen a growth into that area where people are trying to find solutions without meeting, without touching, without exchanging. People are able to deliver. Whether it is a business card, a paper, a proposal, a brochure, everything is supposed to be contactless for many years to happen.

Second thing which I have seen here is people are moving work from home much more than what they anticipated before. There are some large companies in India, including TCS, including Infosys. These people have announced 70-80% of workforce to work from home.

This means negative side to real estate and positive side to a lot of technology, a requirement at many homes right now which is much more powerful.

In our case, I think it is very important for us to share that we had been working almost 10% of the manpower at office, almost 90% of people are at home. So we are successfully able to achieve a contactless working, no need of coming office, and we are around a 1000-people team, so not a small team. This, we could achieve very well.

SABRINA LIM: Hello, Dr. Ajay?

AJAY DATA: —own Indian version of videoconferencing, just like Zoom or Google Meet. 2000 applications happened, and out of that, one of us is there, we're in top ten, so we are also creating a videoconferencing solution for government of India. Maybe we get our luck and chances to serve the entire government.

So i would say this contactless economy is the key where all the things which are going to happen, how do we exchange business card, which kind of capability is required, how do we exchange contacts, how do we exchange information without being need to physical meeting with anyone?

At the end, I think it is very important to be safe, lest everything can be on second stage, we can see that we are going to be safer, we are not going to take chances, because if there's a life, then everything can follow. Thank you very much.

SABRINA LIM: Thank you very much, Dr. Ajay. Since we have a number of speakers today, what we'd like to do is after every second speaker, we'd like to invite Pam to come on very shortly just to see if there might be any questions that people might want to raise already. So Pam, please.

PAM LITTLE:

Thank you, Sabrina. Hi everyone. Welcome again to this APAC Space session held during ICANN 68. It's wonderful to see you all, not just those familiar names and faces from this region but I notice in attendee list, we also have a number of board members and other community members from other parts of the world. Welcome. And I know for some of you, the timing may not be the most convenient. But thank you all for joining us, and welcome once again.

As Sabrina said, we have quite a number of presenters today, so to make it easier for folks, if you have a burning question or comment you'd like to make for our speakers who just spoke, please, can you maybe raise your hand or type your questions in the Q&A pod so Sabrina can help read them out or I can call you and then you can speak?

And if not, then you can perhaps also think about any questions or comments or story you would like to share, and we can do that after all the presentations are concluded. So with that, I'm not seeing any hands or any question in the Q&A pod, so Sabrina, may I suggest we go for the next speaker? So back to you. I'm not sure about the order. Is that going to be Sophia from KNET to share her registry perspective? Over to you, Sophia. Thanks.

SABRINA LIM:

Thanks, Pam. Sophia, please.

SOPHIA FENG:

Hi everyone. For the record, I'm Sophia Feng from KNET, and also from KNET's child company, ZDNS, which is the company focusing strictly on the products and services on domain names.

I'm in charge of the new gTLD business in our organizations, and I'm more in the business side. So today, I will speak more from the business perspective what will be the impacts of COVID-19 on the registry business from our observations.

And as you know, during the Chinese New Year, the Chinese Spring Festival, that was when the outbreaks of COVID-19 emerged. Actually, we had the longest Chinese New Year for many years from my experience that our company had more than a month holiday, that everybody just encourages to stay in their home towns and not to travel back to Beijing where our company is located.

At the beginning, as the first speakers also mentioned, our perspective is it's probably not going to be a long solution or very big deals as we see before the holidays, but then the situation getting serious and more severe, and then we start observing how the registration numbers and how the impacts going to be on the business side.

So from our observations, also from observation from the other experts in the Chinese domain industry, right now, we see that for the half year hat we see that the COVID-19's impacts on registry business will be more a short-term negative impact on number of registrations and registration income. However, there will actually be long-term positive impacts on the importance of domains and growth on the domains in the Chinese market.

And how we come to this conclusion, or how I come to this conclusion just from a personal perspective is if we see from the registration numbers, by the end of 2019, there were 9 million domains under management in ZDNS platform.

Just for preview, just fully understanding that ZDNS actually have 50 plus new gTLDs which we support with the technical backend solutions, and then we also help all the international TLDs to enter into Chinese market. So we actually have worked with a lot of new gTLD registries and also ccTLD registry, including .co.

So that was the numbers by the end of 2019, and by the end of Q1 2020, we see the number of domains under management is 9.5 million in our platform. So actually, you see there's 5.5% of growth. That's also because the Q1 is by the end of March, so probably people have this perspective of same kind of expectation as me, we see that maybe this is going to be a short-term impact and it's not going to be a long-term impact on the economy. So that will probably affect the business confidence and also domain investors' confidence in the money they're going to invest in domain names.

So by now, we see that nearly the end of Q2 2020, the number of domains in our platforms is 9.3 million. So you'll see there are 2% of decrease from previous Q. That is not a normal phenomenon, because usually, if you see the whole curve from 2014 when the new gTLDs [born,] it's constantly growing. So just by the normal turns of business, we should have seen growth in the Q2 2020 as well.

So that is, the numbers that we're seeing, the actual facts that are reflected on the registration numbers, and that also the registries I work with are all saying the COVID-19 actually impacts the budgets of the business and the domain investors, so the renewal rates is actually decreased. I don't have the actual new rates, but I believe that I we put all the data by the end of the queue and then we will see actually the decrease of the renewal rates and the new registrations as well.

So that is the short-term impacts here, but luckily, I've seen a lot of registry is actively work with the registrar, the channel, to find our new marketing and sales approach that will attract new registrations and sustain the renewal rates.

Just as an example, because KNET, our mother company of ZDNS, is the registry operator of .url in English, but [inaudible] that's a Chinese IDN, .wǎngzhǐ, that's a Chinese IDN. So during the pandemic, the .wǎngzhǐ, every registry has its annual business goals they have to meet, and we've been very worried how the pandemic is going to affect the registration. So we put out a new strategy that we work with the registrar to actively hold online streaming conferences to attract more business users.

Actually, one registrar, they held a very successful online streaming conferences and attract about 80,000 SMEs, so 80,000 participants from SMEs. And actually, also, the registry, the .wǎngzhǐ offers the first year of registration for free to attract the new registrations.

And that promotion has been very successful. During last two Q, we've seen the new registration about 80,000 for .wǎngzhǐ for the last two

quarter. And of course, along with the new registration, there were also multiple-year registrations as well. So that is a combined efforts of registries and registrars together to deal with the pandemic and [sustain the incomes.]

That is the short-term impacts and how the registries are dealing with it. For the long term, what I'm observing is as the governments and the whole society is encouraged to keep the certain social distance, not encouraging people to go back to work immediately, so a lot of people a still working from home and students are studying from home as well.

So there's a trend emerging, more ecommerce, more online education, and more online entertainment such as games and online streaming applications such as TikTok, it's very popular.

I see the Chinese companies and business adapt really quickly to how to reform the business strategy to cope with the COVID-19 and keep the economy running. And also, with the support of the government, of course.

What I'm seeing is this kind of strategy will encourage more Internet users, encourage the people go online and doing business. So that's what I'm seeing. There will be long-term positive impacts on the importance of domains and growth of the domains, because more business are putting more focus on their online community and online space that will be the emerge of more domains.

That's why I'm seeing whole industry in China, the registries and registrars, are actually thinking and trying to figure out ways how to embrace the new online marketing tools, using them to grow more sales.

So I think that's some of my observations, and last but not least, or what I'm also seeing, impacts on some new registries. For example, take ZDNS, we acquired .fans and .ren—that means people in Chinese—these two TLDs last year. So we are actually new startup registries, wanted to bring those TLDs to the Chinese market.

So as a new startup, we usually would go to the conferences and meeting our channels and building our brands and promoting it heavily. However, during this pandemic, we're facing a very big challenge as to we cannot really work with our channel face-to-face, closely, as before.

We're also facing challenges like the governments are working slower than before because everybody is working from home. So it's difficult to get some of the permissions that we need to work in the Chinese market. So that will also slow down the onboards of the TLDs from the registrar side. So that is the new challenges we're facing from the new registry and new gTLD side.

But I believe that with the pandemic, it's become more a daily phenomenon and also, it would change the world, how it works, and it would change the business how it works. And I believe the registries, we need to just watch and observe and adapt and find ways to cope

with it. I think that's how it's going to work, and I still believe that there is a bright future in front of us. Thanks, everybody, for listening.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you so much, Sophia. So continuing in related but slightly different vein, next we have the registrar perspective, Antonia Chu from Alibaba Cloud. Antonia, please.

ANTONIA CHU:

Thank you, Sabrina. Hello, everyone. Following Sophia's presentation, I'm very glad to take a few minutes to share our registrar's experience and the impact on us during the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the first half of the year 2020.

As you may aware that Alibaba Group is headquartered in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province of China, and we have regional offices all over the country and around the globe.

Almost all of our domain registrar business staff are based in Beijing. So from the timeline on this slide, you can see that from January, COVID-19 started spreading wildly, first in the city of Wuhan and then across the country.

In late January, we also had our Chinese new year holiday, which was scheduled to be seven days, but later extended to two weeks straight. Most of the provinces and cities declared a state of emergency. People were asked to wear facial masks outside, and recommended to avoid going outside if not necessary.

After new year holiday, most employees started to work from home or part-time home for approximately another month. Then in March, the pandemic was under control and things started to recover in all aspects.

However, earlier this month, as you may read on the news, some new infection cases were recognized again here in Beijing. So as to avoid wide spreading and [inaudible] infection risk, from last week, we go to offices on a weekly shift, which means only 50% of staff can work from home.

The pandemic had influenced the business, of course. The curve on the bottom of the slide shows the total monthly revenue of our registrar business for the past six months. There was a clear drop from late January to March. According to our statistics, the revenue in February dropped by 30% while increased speed of Q1 slowed down significantly comparing to that of last year. When it comes to different TLDs, it seems to us that the influence on new gTLD was greater than legacy TLD. Next slide, please.

For the past several months, our registrar has taken multiple measures in response to COVID-19-related issues. For example, registration of COVID-19-related domain names were restricted to combat illegal online activities. Also, illegal and abusive websites have been taken down once discovered and reported.

For users who have difficulties in making domain renewal in time, our registrar have been working closely with registries to provide a renewal extension and some other preferential policies.

So far, the major challenges encountered by us is communication difficulties created by homer working, both internally and externally. We do have some very nice online working tools, such as DingDing, Tencent Conference, and of course, Zoom. But the communication efficiency is not as good as face-to-face discussion, of course.

Besides, the negative and unseen influence of COVID-19 is beyond comprehension. Domain market is deeply connected to global economy and cannot immune from economic downturn. Next slide, please.

So after the breakout of COVID-19, Alibaba is trying our best to ride out the storm together with the world. In Late January, Alibaba and the Jack Ma Foundation committed to contribute 1 billion RMB fund for medical supplies. So far, over 600 million has been used for test kits and vaccine research.

From our observation, COVID-19's influence on business exists and still continues, but things are containable so far. However, as we cannot tell if and when this pandemic will be over, I guess the best we can do for now is to keep working closely with each other.

As a domain registrar, we will stand together with our users, with ICANN community, and also the industry in getting through the tough times. That's all from me. Thank you all.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you very much, Antonia. Now that we've had a round of another two speakers, I would like to invite our community discussion

facilitator, Pam Little, to come back for a little while, and I believe we already have a couple of questions lined up.

PAM LITTLE:

Thank you, Sabrina, and thank you, Sophia and Antonia for sharing your journeys with us as a registry and as a registrar so far. As Antonia said, we're not out of the woods yet, and so we are in uncharted waters. So we need to kind of work together, support each other and weather the storm, and hopefully, everyone come out of this stronger and better.

So we've got two questions in the Q&A pod. Would Sabrina like to do the honor, read out this—

SABRINA LIM:

Yes, I'll help to read out the questions. The first question is from Rubens Kuhl. He says, "Are ccTLD domains under management numbers growing or decreasing in the APAC region? Most ccTLDs in other regions are seeing higher registration numbers."

PAM LITTLE:

Perhaps Sophia, would you have something to share with us? I know your business probably mainly focuses on new gTLDs, but would you know about the ccTLD market like .cn for example? Or maybe other panelists also may have experience in your particular ccTLD or country.

SOPHIA FENG:

Hi Pam. I don't have the official data on the ccTLD like .cn, however, because we're located in same building, I talk to some of the folks from CNNIC. Actually, yeah, we're seeing big growth during the pandemic for the ccTLD registration, that actually is true. Just that the CNNIC hasn't really published official data until a certain time frame, so we're probably not having the numbers. But just from the unofficial channel, there's growth.

I think the presentation by Antonia says in the slides we see actually more growth from the legacy TLDs than new gTLD. It's probably due to the awareness issue. That's it from me.

PAM LITTLE:

Thank you, Sophia. And I understand Hasnul from MYNIC, .my may also have something to share with us. Hasnul, would you have some data to share with us in terms of ccTLD market?

HASNUL HASAN:

I don't have one in front of me per se. If we talk about registration per se, we actually are seeing an increasing number. This is also because our partners, our registrars are also really ramping up in the adoption for the .my registration.

In terms of churn rate, if I were to look at the statistics, it's actually plus or minus similar to the previous year's traction when we see number of registration, with the exception of, if I'm not mistaken, last month. We didn't meet the normal churn rate, but then it went back to

the normal churn rate. Our churn rate usually is about 7% from that number.

So what we're hoping is with the new government stimulus, it's going to go up further as we synergize the efforts to actually get people to start doing things online. But overall, I think to answer the question from a domain under management, we are a bit decreasing but we are seeing an increase in registration. Does that answer the question?

PAM LITTLE: Yes, I think that's helpful. Thanks, Hasnul. I believe we have Endo-san from JRPS, .jp. do you have some data you could share with us?

ATSUSHI ENDO: Hi. Regarding the .jp case, we have not so kind of a big increase or decrease regarding the .jp registration in February, March, April. But we see that slightly kind of decrease in new creation but the kind of whole bunch of .jp seems stable growth and that's the observation of these two, three months. Thanks.

PAM LITTLE: Thanks. That's very interesting as well. So I believe we also have Ai-Chin from TWNIC, that's ccTLD manager for .tw. Ai-Chin, would you care to share with us some of your data, please?

AI-CHIN LU: Yeah, I think for the COVID-19 in Taiwan, it's pretty good. The number of domain names I think keep the same rate. The increasing I think is very stable. So it will have no influence on the COVID-19, yeah, for the .tw domain name registration. I think it's almost the same.

PAM LITTLE: Thank you, Ai-Chin. It's good to see that it's stable. But some ccTLDs obviously reported or seen a spike in registration, so I guess every country seem to behave differently or the pattern is slightly different.

Okay, so I think we will probably draw a line for that question and hope that answers Rubens' question. We now have another question. Sabrina, would you please read that out?

SABRINA LIM: Yes. The next question is from Kurt Pritz. He says, "Hi, Sophia. Thanks for the work that went into your presentation. How do you think ICANN can help the domain name industry promote the use of domain names as a way to make businesses more successful during this period when people are on their laptop rather than at the office?"

PAM LITTLE: Sophia, would you please share your thought? Thanks.

SOPHIA FENG: Yes. Thank you, Kurt, for the questions. You always have very good questions for me. So I actually work with some marketing folks in our

companies and explore new ways of how to marketing TLDs and [inaudible] the general universal awareness, [like the public aware] more about the importance of domains and how you can build websites and doing a business, with a startup of domains.

During our experiments, we're actually right now experimenting with some social media, and we're also in touch with MCN like the multichannel national social influencers. We're trying to bring our new marketing initiatives together with new trends right now in the Chinese market.

And with all these new kind of ways of promoting your business and also with other impacts of new technology, like blockchain technology and also the Internet of Things and the promotion of the IPv6, with all the new marketing tools, new promotion and also new technology, I just also think ICANN should put more efforts and more budget probably throughout investigations or throughout that research together with the registry and registrar to see how we can cope with the new trends in the market and bring more awareness to the TLDs to the general public.

So I think in universal acceptance, there are a lot of things ICANN can do, and also help and work with the registries and registrars. It's just that if ICANN can get involved with the—because I know that ICANN is doing the five-year strategic planning, I think in that planning, it's very important that we come up with the whole domain industry as a whole. Because we know ICANN spend a lot of energy in promoting ICANN and ICANN meetings and some of ICANN initiatives, but I think

it's more important that we put in some thought and effort and budget into promoting the whole domain industry to the general public. I think that will certainly affect the future of the domain industry and the business and everybody's work in the domain industry. So I think I have bigger thoughts in that topic, but it's just not very concrete how ICANN should do more in the more specific topics. I think that [leaves to the constituency] to probably reflect that kind of thought. Just sharing my two cents of mind.

PAM LITTLE:

Thank you, Sophia. And I agree, how to promote domain name industry as a topic has been talked about when the 2012 new gTLD program was launched. And Kurt, you were very close to this. And I guess with the subsequent procedures and next round, that's something we should all keep in mind and keep thinking about ideas, how better to promote the industry as a whole. So the discussion can continue.

So with that, Sabrina, I think we should probably move to the next speaker. And then I do know we have another question in the Q&A pod, but we can leave that until after the next two speakers, perhaps. Thank you.

SABRINA LIM:

Yes, Pam. Sounds good. Thank you so much. So Afiq, we do take note that you have a question in the question pod. We'll get to it after the next round of speakers. Up next, to share with us the At-Large end user

perspective on COVID-19 in the region, we have Satish Babu, chair of APRALO. Satish, please.

SATISH BABU:

Thank you, Sabrina. Thanks for having me. I'm going to be speaking on behalf of the interests of the end users. I know this is not the IGF and it is ICANN where the remit is somewhat kind of limited, but yet, when you speak from the end user side, there are certain things that need to be highlighted.

So these are things that most of us know, but I've just put it down as reference. So most of the economies in the region are set to shrink, and we have no idea when the pandemic is likely to end. If there's no vaccine developed, it might stretch on for quite some time. Even if there is a vaccine, by the time it reaches the remotest ends of our very vast region, it's going to take some time.

Most sectors and sections within society have been impacted adversely, but Internet-based services have actually thrived in most cases. Manufacturing for instance has been significantly impacted. The rise of local and hyperlocal supply chains, which is a reality in many parts of our region, this might impact international trade.

Some sections like the elderly and the poor have become much more vulnerable. In fact, the elderly in most countries—senior citizens—are not allowed to step out of their homes, which is actually quite a significant problem.

Environmental impact has been very positive, so we are very happy, and even though our meetings are all virtual now, the environmental impact is actually very interesting and all of us, I'm sure, agree with that.

So one thing to be noted is that despite the deep impact, we have not seen any kind of social failures when the society itself breaks down. That has not happened. So although our region has some of the poorest people in the world, we have not seen this happening, which is a very good thing. And right now, the general feeling is that we have kind of reached the peak and now it is going to be slightly less arduous as we go forward. Next, please.

Now, if you look at the Internet itself at a very broad level, the Internet has become much more important after and during the pandemic. The end user role has become also much more strongly articulated.

All of us are end users because it's a role, actually, whether we are business or government, we are also end users. There have been more users and more hours per user on the computer. So the use of the Internet has become more intensive. It's a lifeline for many people. Work from home, which was kind of dismissed as infeasible earlier now has been shown as not just feasible but also desirable in many situations.

The Internet is also a major infrastructure in the fight against the pandemic, and there has been a significant shift to the digital mode in many sectors, including education, retail, production, consumption and so on.

So the other effect is that the Internet has emerged as a critically important tool not just for business or for work or for governance, but even for social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, because in the deep lockdown, the Internet was the only way to contact people for many citizens.

Now, in several parts of the region, schools have not opened and the classes have gone online. All these have actually—there's been some social costs as well, and we will see them also. Next please.

The obvious problem has been the cybersecurity incidents which have shot up, and it includes DNS abuse which is a concern for all of us, consumer fraud, and disinformation campaigns and probably many more. And this is something that ICANN also has been looking at, and DNS abuse in fact is a hot topic for us in this meeting.

There has been some concern about contact tracing or proximity tracing apps. Now, although they say contact tracing is actually proximity tracing, mostly Bluetooth-based, some geolocation-based, and the concerns have been on privacy, surveillance, data protection, and the transparency of source code as well as the duration of data retention.

Now several countries have these apps. In India for example, after a lot of concerns expressed by citizens and activists, the government has released the source code, at least the app source code, as open source. Although we do not yet have the backend code, but that itself is a good step. But the larger concerns on how long will the data be retained, will it be a kind of tool to surveil on citizens and will citizens

lose their privacy, these are questions that are relevant in many parts of our region.

We see that there's been a sudden rise in all kinds of webinars. This is interesting because it seems to have set off the creative aspects of people and there are all kinds of webinars happening on tools like Zoom. Several new Internet applications like virtual queues now to enforce crowd control, virtual queues are being done on apps.

In my part of the world, after the long lockdown when it has opened, the government realized that they will have a big crowd at the alcohol shops, so there was an alcohol app released by the government to control the crowds. It is very interesting.

But then, why I mention this is because it reveals a certain digital divide. When the app came out, suddenly people noted that some sections of society who did not know what an app was, what a smartphone was, they were left out. So this is actually hidden, these kinds of digital divides, but they came out when these sort of apps began to be enforced. Another thing is work from home, study from home, etc. and these are all things that have caused people to take up computers on a scale that is unprecedented.

Now, when the schools went online, many people thought that the digital divide could be overcome by buying or purchasing a mobile phone. But that is not the case always. Next slide, please.

Here you see one of the users who's sitting on the roof of a house with an umbrella, because that's the only place where she could get signal

on her mobile to study. So she's actually joining her class. She cannot step out of the home because this is lockdown. She can't get the Internet from anywhere else in her house. And she's determined to join her class.

So she says in fact in the newspaper interview that—this is the monsoon season in my part of the world, with rains heavily, nonstop for several days together. She says, “I'm not afraid of the rain, I'm only afraid of the lightning sitting on top of my house.” So this is another digital divide which has suddenly come out. So the COVID and the extensive use of the internet therefore has brought out these kinds of divides. Next slide, please.

Now, how has COVID impacted volunteers and specifically ICANN? Face-to-face meetings are all converted to virtual meetings, but these virtual meetings, as we can see, are much shorter in duration, which means the overall [work transacted] is probably less, which again means that the rest of the work gets moved to intersessional work, which unfortunately means more work for the volunteers back in their regular periods at home.

And the fact that they have to spend much more time on computers, use Internet, use equipment, laptops and mobile phones, so generally, there is a feeling which has been articulated in the At-Large that there is a higher volunteer workload and cost. And of course, Zoom fatigue for some high load volunteers, some of whom are here in this call. So it is very clear that we are unlikely to return to the original state of

things, so we need to then cope with this new normal. Next slide, please.

When we look to the future, the internet is a lifeline. So we have to ensure that the quality and the bandwidth and all other aspects of the Internet continue and there will be further upscaling of the Internet. The DNS is a very important infrastructure. So for the future of societies and nations and the entire region, it is important that the Internet is strong and resilient infrastructure.

The DNS abuse and other security and privacy issues also need to be addressed. Now, in terms of the multi-stakeholder model of governance, we have to take into account these changes that have happened and will continue for the foreseeable future. And finally, perhaps it's a good time to look at how we can improve or tweak the multi-stakeholder model and its processes so that we can ensure that volunteers and stakeholders remain engaged and committed given the increased challenges. Thank you very much. Back to you, Sabrina.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you very much, Satish. I'm conscious of time, so I think we can quickly move on to our next speaker, representing youth perspective we have Manju Chen for Y4IG. Manju, please.

MANJU CHEN:

Hello everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to share the youth experience for COVID-19's impact on the APAC region. First, I want to briefly introduce what is Youth 4 IG. We're a group of young people

who are passionate about Internet governance, and we're a really young organization. We started last year after the ICANN 64 Kobe meeting, and our founder, Mili, she actually created a WhatsApp group and we've been growing since then.

We focus on knowledge sharing and to keep those young people who enter the Internet governance world from escaping. In order to do that, we have been hosting monthly webinars with different themes, and we actually just had our own ICANN 68 prep session last Saturday. That was pretty successful.

We also do capacity building programs such as the mentorship program we have shared with you guys last year in Montréal. So this mentorship program has started this May and is now ongoing. We're extremely honored to have Samiran and Donna as our mentors who are now leading five mentees to explore the wonderful world of Internet governance.

Aside from the capacity building effort, of course, we want to advocate issues from the user perspective. We want to offer youth opinion on the Internet governance discussions and just to create a more vocal and meaningful youth participation in the Internet governance, multi-stakeholder process. Next slide, please.

So since this late March in Youth 4 IG, we have been starting a blog series where we have our youth members from different countries, places in the APAC region to write about the impact of COVID-19 in their countries and how they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

And while this report focuses on the COVID-19's interaction with technology and the Internet, of course, we highlight youth issues and social challenges too. We actually plan to publish the report before ICANN 68, but I guess we kind of picked up the ICANN habits, so we're a bit delayed on our schedule so the report is going to be published in July. Next slide, please.

So as you can see from the map, this report actually covers a lot of countries in the APAC region. We have now in total 12 articles with in-depth analysis of the countries' response to the COVID-19. You can see there are two countries with an asterisk. They're the countries with more than one article sharing the response. In New Zealand, we don't actually have an article, but Elliot from Australia has written up a short summary of New Zealand and it's going to be included in the report. Next slide, please.

So some common topics we can see from our articles is that first, of course, a lot of members, they stress that innovations in technology are key, definitely key in fighting COVID-19. For example, a lot of industry led innovation, including the contact tracing apps, and for example, South Korea and a lot of other countries and Singapore for example, it's the innovation that's helping the government trace COVID-19.

And of course, this fight against COVID-19 cannot be fought without a collaboration between stakeholders, so state governments and tech community and civil society are working together to fight against the coronavirus. But of course, a lot of members, they have mentioned

concern arose from this fight against coronavirus. For example, the contact tracing apps that are used to contain the spread of the virus, suddenly, they have privacy issues and human rights issues, and also geo fencing technology that's used when people are in quarantine. It's also a way to contain the virus, but we also have to take care of how it's going to invade our privacy and how it might have some privacy concerns.

Another issue I think was mentioned in the last presentation is the Internet access. So all this talk about contact tracing apps and geo fencing is really meaningless when you don't even have the Internet to either download the app or install the app in your mobile phone. So this digital divide between the haves and have nots is certainly something we have to fix.

But aside from the serious topics, we can also learn some fun facts from members' articles. For example, Pavel from Thailand has shared how Thailand almost had a riot because there was an alcohol ban and the ban was actually extended longer than people's expectation.

And also in Taiwan and Korea, professional baseball league is still playing, and actually a lot of Americans stay up at odd hours just to watch baseball in Taiwan or Korea because they just miss baseball so much. Next slide, please.

So, what are the impacts of COVID-19 on our youth involvement in the Internet governance? The plus is of course the increased exposure, so our online promotion is easier to get through and easier to spread broadly because while most people stuck at home have nothing to do

but surf on the Internet, and also for us, it's a plus—so meetings, Internet governance events, they're more accessible because we don't have to be there in person or physically, we can just have the login link and we can attend the meeting virtually without having to commute and stuff. And as long as we have our Internet and laptop or our mobile phone, we can go to the meetings anywhere we wish.

But the negative of course for youth community fellowship, all fellowships, most of the fellowships are either deferred or cancelled. The fellowship for the youth community is really our best shot to attend meetings in person and meet new people and make connections. Myself, I was supposed to be an ICANN 67 fellow which was deferred to ICANN 69, but now ICANN 69 is going to be virtual again, so it's definitely a bummer and it's not easy for us.

Another challenge of remote participation, I think all of us in APAC will really feel the pain. I'm super happy now we're following Malaysia time, because it's the exact same time as Taiwan, but when there was ICANN 67 in Cancun, it was totally painful. And in the youth community, most of us are actually students who have to attend classes during the day, or even if we're working, we're young professionals, we still have a day job that we have to go. So it's impossible that we follow through the sessions throughout the night with meaningful participation and we go to work without dozing off and risk being fired and that stuff. So that's definitely a challenge. Next slide, please.

I guess that's it. We had a thank you page, but I guess it disappeared. We have a lot of Youth 4 IG members in the room too, and I look forward to further engagement when we have the community discussions. Thank you very much.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you so much, Manju. Unfortunately, our last speaker, Mr. Santhosh who's from India's GAC is not available to be with us today. However, on a slightly different note, earlier on we were not able to reach professor Suhaidi who was from the original ICANN 68 Kuala Lumpur local host committee, but we do have instead Aisyah Shakirah who was also helping him on the committee earlier on. So if I could just invite Aisyah now to say a few words on behalf of Malaysia. Aisyah, welcome.

AISYAH SHAKIRAH:

Thank you, Sabrina. Hello, everybody. It's very nice seeing all of you here today. I am Aisyah Shakirah. I'm based in Malaysia, I'm following the Kuala Lumpur time zone. Currently, I'm with Internet Society, but I'm speaking today in my capacity as a Malaysian. I was previously part of the organizing committee also for the ICANN 68 event before it went virtual.

I'm just jumping in really quickly to say on behalf of Malaysians, I see that Hasnul, Justine Chew was here just now, and Prof. Suhaidi and other Malaysians on the call today. I'd like to welcome everybody to ICANN 68, which was supposed to, as we all know, take place in

Kuala Lumpur. I understand a number of you were looking forward to be physically in the KL city, but it's okay. There's going to be more opportunities in the future, hopefully. And I was just thinking that if things were different, we would probably be in the Petronas Twin Towers right now having coffee.

I understand that a lot of you outside the APAC region are joining from very unusual and strange hours. It's not easy, I'm sure, but I suppose the time zone difference is also part of the virtual Kuala Lumpur experience. And before I end, I'd also like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to the ISOC at ICANN event later today at 12:00 PM UTC. It's basically going to be a fun social event planned for the ICANN and also ISOC community, and the concept is going to be a virtual travel to Kuala Lumpur so even though we can't be there physically, we're going to take you there virtually. So I'll add that link in the chat.

So yes, I hope everybody will have a productive week here at ICANN 68, and I look forward to see you all in the other sessions. Welcome again to virtual Kuala Lumpur. Thank you very much. Back to you, Sabrina.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you so much, Aisyah. Okay, because we don't have much time left—technically, we only have four minutes on the clock and we do actually have three questions in the question pod, may I now quickly invite back Pam to help us with these questions? As usual, I will help to read them out. Pam, please.

PAM LITTLE: Thanks, Sabrina. Sabrina, can you read out the first question, please?

SABRINA LIM: Yes. First question from Afiq Ammar from MCMC in the Government of Malaysia. His question is, with more transactions being made digitally, the development of technology should be expected to accelerate in meeting demand for consumers. How can we use this as an opportunity to elevate the existing domain name market?

PAM LITTLE: Is there anyone from our panel who'd like to take this question from the participants? I don't see any, and perhaps this was actually related to the other questions we dealt with earlier about how to promote the domain market as a whole. So Afiq, if you wouldn't mind, I propose we probably skip to the next question and maybe this conversation needs to continue as how we as a whole can promote the domain industry better, whether it's in the pandemic or post-pandemic or an ongoing basis. So Sabrina, I thought I'd seen a question about the digital divide and connectivity issue. Satish and Manju both have touched upon this topic, so I'd really like to get their thoughts on these questions. So over to you. Can you read out the question, please?

SABRINA LIM: The next question in the question pod is from Pavel Farhan. The COVID-19 pandemic established one certainty as it affected the global

population: Internet accessibility is a privilege. How can we ensure that the work to promote Internet education continues with the less privileged, such as for people in remote areas, minority groups, etc. during this time?

PAM LITTLE: As I said, Satish or Manju, would you like to share your thought on this question from Pavel, please?

SATISH BABU: I'll take a quick shot at it. I think there are multiple stakeholders involved who can make a difference to the situation. That includes the government, civil society, and NGOs, and even some of us, the At-Large ALSes as well as Internet Society chapters. Thank you.

AJAY DATA: I also want to add here a little bit for this very important idea here which our government is doing. To take classes via radio and TV. That's happening to very rural parts where there's no Internet and there's no almost telephone, but they have a radio which comes in less than \$2 which is possible, and almost every home has it, and the TV connections which people use on whatever device they have.

So one-hour or two-hour classes are happening now in our state. It's a great idea to take education to home via TV and radio. Thank you.

PAM LITTLE: Thank you for sharing that, Ajay. The third question is directed to Manju. I'll just quickly read that out given that we're running out of time. That's from Cheryl and directed to Manju. What countries in APAC do your Y4IG members come from? Over to you, Manju. Can you answer that, please?

MANJU CHEN: Yes. We have a lot of countries. I can just—on the top of our head, Australia, Taiwan, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia. We have a lot of countries and we actually—I can send you our webpage. There will be more information of our membership and what work we've been doing. I guess maybe I can share it to Sabrina and Sabrina, when she sends out the meeting notes, everyone can join us in our website or WhatsApp group. Thank you very much.

PAM LITTLE: Thanks Manju. Yes, sending a link to the mailing list will be good, and everyone can help spread the news. So I'm conscious of time, I'm going to hand it back to Sabrina to deal with the AOB. Thank you, Sabrina.

SABRINA LIM: Thank you so much, Pam. Thank you, everybody, for staying slightly past the allotted time that we have. We are one minute past, but thank you so much for hanging on. So we don't really have anything for AOB today unless anyone has anything in particular to raise.

I don't see any particular comments, questions. I have a hand from Edmon. Do you have a question?

[EDMON CHUNG:]

Hello. I just wanted to add one particular observation. A lot of people mentioned about how COVID has changed whether it's schools, whether it's business and stuff. What I recently found is a very interesting thing that I wanted to share with everyone is that businesses and NGOs suddenly become more users of Internet and then they suddenly become interested in Internet governance as well. So for this community, I think there is an opportunity right now and as we hopefully get out of COVID to actually bring in more participation, whether at ICANN or other Internet governance forums.

So I just wanted to throw this out, because this is a little bit of my experience talking to businesses and NGOs who didn't really care about what we do at Internet governance before is now starting to be much more interested. The Zoom bombs, the privacy situations, all the technology that they now are depending on to provide services or to conduct business, they suddenly realize that they are also stakeholders in the Internet governance discussions. I just think this is an opportunity for those of us in the community to reach out and pull those people into the discussions, whether it's here in ICANN or other IGFs or so on.

SABRINA LIM:

Thank you, Edmon. I think many of us certainly agree with that point, especially highlighting how thanks to COVID, everybody even more so than ever realizes how much they are a stakeholder in the Internet.

So if there are no other comments, questions, nothing in the chat or the Q&A pod, I don't see any hands up, in that case, thank you so much, everybody, for joining us today. I'm sorry if we've overrun a wee bit, but we hope you found this a productive and enlightening session. so I wish you all the best, stay safe, take care, have a fruitful ICANN 68, and see you all again very soon. Thank you, and good day, everyone. Bye for now.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]