
ICANN74 | Prep Week – ICANN Board Members Welcome Fellows and NextGen Participants
Wednesday, June 1, 2022 – 18:00 to 19:00 AMS

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Hello, everyone, and welcome to the session of ICANN board members with ICANN74 Fellows and NextGen@ICANN program participants. My name is Siranush Vardanyan and I'm managing the fellowship program. And together with me here is my colleague, Deborah Escalera, who is managing the NextGen@ICANN program. I will be also the remote participation manager for this session.

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With that, I would like to introduce today's agenda. And let me share the slides at the beginning. But after the introduction of the agenda, I will take out the slides so you can see each other's faces. So today, that's me to facilitate and be a remote moderator for you. We will have Goran Marby, ICANN president and CEO, joining us. We will have also Maarten Botterman, Chair of ICANN Board of Directors, who will be welcoming all of you. And also Leon

Sanchez, Vice-Chair of ICANN Board of Directors and Fellow representative in the Board.

So you will see all these links in the agenda space. So I will now stop sharing and give the floor to Maarten to start with the welcome note for the participants. Maarten.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN:

So thank you for that Siranush. And thank you all for having me. It's a true pleasure to open this first meeting from the Fellowship and NextGen program participants to ICANN74. And I understand that many of you will join us in the Netherlands, in The Hague. And I'm really looking forward to see you and meet you there.

And those who can't make it, for sure, you will find that we'll try to do the best we can to make this truly inclusive also for those who participate at a distance. This will be important because some people won't come because they can't travel. Some people won't come because they don't feel safe. And some people won't come for other reasons. And whatever the reasons is that keeps that, it's important that inclusivity is also as available as possible for those people. So really looking forward to see those of you who can be there in person and those who can't be there online

The ICANN Fellowship and NextGen program has the goal to truly strengthen the diversity. And it's aimed to pull in people from

around the world, and particularly from underserved and underrepresented communities, to become active participants in the ICANN community. And since 2014, it was complemented with the NextGen program, which is basically students from the region, wherever we are.

So 15 years of the Fellowship program has resulted in more than 800 fellows from over 160 countries of which more than half are actively participating. And in fact, on the screen you look at right now, they're overrepresented because it's four out of six that are actually Fellows—Vladimer, Andrey, current Fellows and Siranush and Leon, former Fellows. So that demonstrates how powerful the program is and how good it has been to help us to evolve not only the way we work but also the people that we get on board. And such a thing is crucial.

So with that, I would say the program works. And it's truly one of our flagships to make ICANN deliver on its mission. And please use this opportunity at your best ability, knowing that everything is possible and knowing that we really need your insights and your input. So please use what you've learned to contribute to the future of ICANN, both in supporting regional work and global policy development.

And we encourage you to leverage the ICANN virtual meetings, as well as the online ability to participate, as well as the in-person

meetings that we have to learn to familiarize yourself. And you will find that step by step, the knowledge and everything you have to bring, you will also be able to bring in in a more effective way. So it's not only about being right but also about getting clear. Get your message across.

And the group of mentors and staff that is guiding you in this is an excellent opportunity to learn from. And you will find, for those in The Hague, that even in the corridors, you will run into any person being most likely very willing to assist you in finding your way, in sharing your ideas, in listening to you and welcoming you in the ICANN community. So with that, back to you, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you very much, Maarten. And thank you for the wonderful, welcoming message to all the participants. With that, I would like to give the floor now to Leon Sanchez, who currently serves as vice-chair for the ICANN Board and who joined the ICANN ecosystem through the Fellowship program and is our pride for the program. Leon, the floor is yours.

LEON SANCHEZ: Thank you very much, Siranush, for your kind words. And thank you everyone for your time. If you don't mind, I would like to speak in Spanish to take advantage of the interpretation services.

And of course, thank the interpreters as usual for the great work they do in letting us understand and communicate each other. So now I will switch to Spanish.

So as usual, this is my favorite session of all ICANN sessions in a meeting. I just stole this phrase from Goran because I know it's one of Goran's favorite sessions as well. It's a great pleasure being with you, first of all, because I would like to share my experience. I've been part of the Fellowship program at ICANN.

And certainly, you Fellows that are coming back ... It's not first-time Fellows, as I've heard, because this is how the program is being organized now. So at the policy forums, those that have applied for the program and have been selected are Fellows that have been Fellows in another past time. So you know—you are aware of—the things that you may do through these programs. You know that will lead you to the ICANN ecosystem to answer your questions, to clear your doubts, or to find opportunities for relationships that you may have with various players that certainly are part of our community. Consider your interests, so as to know how they match decision making processes.

But most of all, I would like all of you to know that being a Fellow is a privilege. This is an opportunity that you should seize. This is an opportunity that if you are interested in providing, or serve our

community, I think this is one of the key channels we have, so as to be part of this ecosystem.

As I do in every session, I want to convey the following message. Any leadership position that you may have access to is a leadership position that will give you the opportunity of serving your community. It's a privilege. It's not a privilege, personal position, but a service position. You may be appointed so as to give your input and constructively contribute to ICANN's mission and to the ecosystem of the domain name systems and the IP addresses.

Bearing this in mind, you should feel free to get in touch with—to contact me. And Siranush certainly knows that every time any Fellows get in touch with me—and I've had some chats with some of you—I'm always available to help you as much as possible. And certainly, in some cases, to motivate you because I know that we have lots of work in our daily lives. And so to devote this many hours to ICANN's missions, to ICANN's works, is an extra effort that our community of volunteers does. And we have to acknowledge this, to recognize this.

So, as I always say, I'm a click away. So you may send an e-mail, Skype me. Siranush has all my contact numbers and data if you would like to have some kind of personal interview. Or we may meet face-to-face in The Hague. So I would be really glad to chat

with you in a face-to-face session or in the corridors. And what I have learned during all these years, and consider that I was a Fellow at Prague in 2012, I may share with you what I have learned in my journey. And you should find in me a friend, a person you may trust in, a person you may resort to, and I will open as many doors as possible. So thank you very much. I give you the floor back, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN:

Thank you, Leon. Thank you very much. Goran just notified that he will be a bit late and I will make sure to give him the floor for welcoming all of you. But I would like to give a warm welcome to our NextGen@ICANN program participants for whom ICANN74 will be the first-ever ICANN meeting in-person. So I'm looking forward to meeting all of you in The Hague and also listen to your wonderful presentations during the ICANN74. So welcome. And we are really happy having you joining the ICANN world.

Now we can open the floor for questions and answers. So if there is any question, you can raise your hand or you can post your question in the chat and I will make sure to ask that question loudly. Don't shy. Maarten and Leon are here to hear the great questions from you, as always. So don't shy. Raise your hand, and ask your question, and talk to us. So who will go the first with the question? I'm surprised. There are no questions?

LEON SANCHEZ:

If we have no volunteers for questions, Siranush, let me try to spark the discussion here and try to find out. I remember when I first came as a fellow. My profession is as a lawyer. I am an intellectual property lawyer in Mexico. So I felt inclined to join the Intellectual Property Constituency as a natural way of trying to contribute to the work we do at ICANN. So in a way, I was, again, inclined to join the IPC.

But then someone told me ... And that someone is here in this call. And I want to mention Cheryl because she might be a little bit shy to ... No. She's never shy. Of course she's not shy. But she told me, "It's good that you tried to join the IPC. But in the end, try to find your place within the community, with those who push for things that aren't not only of your professional interest but also of your personal convictions. Because if you contribute in that way, with pushing for your personal convictions, your personal interests, as opposed to your professional interests, you might find different places within the community. And that will actually allow you to have a wider scope of work within the icon community."

So of course, as usual, I took her advice into account and I started exploring opportunities and ways to contribute with the end users. So for that, I referred to the At-Large community. As I had

been an advocate for users' rights in my in my country, I felt like, of course, trying to be near of the end users within the ICANN community would also be a good way to contribute to ICANN's mission. So yes. I approached the At-Large community. After that, I joined the At-Large community. I was already a member of an At-Large Structure in Mexico. And as such, I was qualified to begin contributing with the At-Large community.

And then I applied to a leadership position through the NomCom. I applied for an ALAC seat via the NomCom. Well, then, the rest is kind of history already and here I am today. But what I'm trying to say here is be open. Be open when choosing where to find your place in the ICANN community. Don't be misguided by preconceptions or professional interests. Instead, keep your mind open and try to relate to each and any part of the community that you might find interesting for you, keeping in mind, again, that sometimes it might not be essentially aligned with what you do for a living. But as Cheryl referred in the chat, it will be more aligned with your core values.

And of course, when we work, pushing for our core values, I think that the rest comes naturally. And success is ahead of you if you push for your core values. So I hope that sparks the discussion and brings in volunteers to raise questions. Thank you again, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Leon, for great insight. You are the great example how one can start as a newcomer and now be in the Board. You are the success—one of the successes of the program—definitely. And we have the first question coming from Jade Makory—I hope I pronounced the name properly—the ICANN 74 Fellow, “What are some of the opportunities that Fellows can take advantage of to contribute more to ICANN and also take more responsibility in various ICANN roles?” Who would like to start, Maarten or Leon?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: We will take turns. Otherwise one of us will ... We've been working together for so long now that we know each other. And we're also grown into the matter over time. And I guess that's the first part of the answer is you grow into it. You grow into recognizing the opportunities and you will feel where you can—actually pulled to contribute best and in line with what Leon said earlier.

Now, it's not only during the Fellowship meetings that this happens. Please look beyond. And you will be seeing some sessions over your period in The Hague. And you may have seen some sessions already. That is the sessions that are taking place in public space. Next to that, check out the website. Check out the public comment pages. See where discussions are going on and where you feel pulled in to say, “Hey. This makes sense,” or, “This

interests me more,” or, “How about this?” Then ask the question or contribute your opinion. It's really doing it, growing into it.

And no need to choose exclusively your line of action already now. Take your time to grow into it. Get a broader understanding of the whole community and then focus on where your contribution fits best. They'll be welcome.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Maarten. Leon, would you like to add?

LEON SANCHEZ: Yeah. Just to round up with Maarten said, my experience within the ICANN community is that doers are better received than talkers. So if you do more and talk less, you will be well received in pretty much anywhere in our community. So if you're a hands-on person, if you do things, if you get involved, if you contribute to policy, if you contribute to advising the board, etc., you will find your way. You will naturally come to a point in which you will find a place where you will be able to contribute meaningfully to the ICANN mission.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Leon. And just complementing your points here. I also came through the fellowship program. But I then, after that,

served for several years in At-Large. And it's great pleasure for me always to see my beautiful mentor, Cheryl Langdon-Orr, joining the sessions and always supporting the Fellows in any way. There is always an opportunity and welcoming people there in ICANN who can support you. There is only need for you to have that passion and be open for learning. The opportunities are there.

We have the second question here from Samwel Kariuki, who is asking you as Board members, “What are some of the challenges you face as ICANN Board members?” And then we'll go to Sokol, whose hand is raised.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN:

Good question. The ICANN system is unique in many ways. And if you have a business background or a government background, you may be used to the model where it's the board who determines what's going to happen next. In our model, the Board is actually there to facilitate and to make sure that what we do is, in the end, legitimate, and in line with the bylaws, and reasonable—what to be done and what to prioritize is actually in the hands of the community that determines from bottom up.

So one of the biggest challenges the Board has is that sometimes we feel we know the answer. But we are not imposing that. We're trying to facilitate the community to see how we can get to a good outcome that is generally supported. So consensus—while the

discussions come together from the different communities up to the Board for an opinion and inviting the Org for action. Or asking the Org to act on it. Let's put it in those words.

That is the challenge where we find ourselves in. Do we interpret what the community well and do we guide the organization in taking this action well? And carefully, we feed back our thinking. And nowadays, more and more of what we're also doing is interacting more informally with communities to check directly, "Is this what you mean? How can we make this work? Is this in line with the intent of the policy?" and things like that. So we're trying to close the gap from getting something thrown on our plate, and then need to do something with it, and do so very much in the spirit that has always been, which is the bottom up, multistakeholder way. That's my biggest challenge. What is yours, Leon?

LEON SANCHEZ:

So, along the lines of what Maarten said, I think that trying to achieve the balance between the different stakeholders because we, of course, are appointed by different bodies within the ICANN community. For example, in my case, I am privileged to be appointed by the At-Large community. But then again, we have other parts of the community who appoint board members like the GNSO, the ccNSO, etc.

I think one of the main challenges when you get seated at the Board is to comply with the mandate that the bylaws impose to every Board member, which is that once you are seated in the Board, you don't represent your appointing body but you represent the best interests of the Organization. So being aware of that, and also trying to make those who appointed you aware of the situation, and that the fact that you are not representing them doesn't mean at all that you are turning your back on them, but instead, having a wider array of points of view to take into account. It's definitely a challenge sometimes.

I have been very lucky to have the support of the At-Large community and the ALAC as well. And they perfectly understand what I'm saying. And I think that that has made that challenge easier for me. But I think it's definitely one of the challenges you need to face—creating that balance and that understanding between yourself, and your appointing body, and your constituents.

And also in operational matters, so to speak, another challenge is the time that you need to devote to performing appropriately in the Board. If you are someone who is not able or willing to dedicate the time that it is needed to optimally perform as a Board member, then you should definitely not apply for a position on the Board. If you are someone who has the time, the dedication, and is willing to dedicate and devote that time to the

Board and the work we do at the board, then by all means, you should definitely apply. But that is a challenge.

And another challenge in these uncertain times and these times of pandemic, I can tell would be dealing with different time zones. I say this because it, for some, might be a harder challenge than it has been for me. And let me explain why I say this. In the At-Large community, we spread pretty much all around the world. So I am used to attend meetings in different time zones. For example, my phone even has an alarm that is called APRALO Monthly Meeting. So my phone already knows that if I am setting an alarm at 2:00 AM my time, it's because I am attending the APRALO monthly meeting.

And then again, I attend meetings in European time zone, African time zone, which coincides, of course, with the European time zone. Also with the different time zones within the Americas. So that, more or less, has helped me manage the challenge of dealing with different time zones. But when you are in the Board, and we have had to these virtual meetings in the past two years, it's been challenging, not only for me but also for my colleagues, to have to switch or virtually travel to another time zone to be able to perform as a Board member in the time zone that is being used to hold the virtual meeting at that certain time.

So, again, that could also be a challenge. But that's not only a challenge that Board members have. That's a challenge that every anyone who participates in the ICANN ecosystem has. But of course, I am seeing it in terms of how we as board members perform in different time zones.

And I could go on because there are many challenges. But then again, I think that I haven't found that ... I've been lucky that I have not found a single challenge that me, and my colleagues—myself with the help of both our sterling staff and my colleagues—have been able to fulfill successfully. So yes. Thank you, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Leon. And there is a great discussion in the chat that ICANN is not for technical people only so everybody can join. It's a place for everyone to come and make their voice heard. So before we move to Sokol, I would like to let everyone know that Goran Marby, ICANN president and CEO, has joined us. And I will give the floor for welcoming speech to Goran. Goran, please.

GORAN MARBY: Thank you. Thank you for inviting me. And sorry again for being late. The ICANN Prep Week is one of the most intense weeks we have. From ICANN Org's perspective, we don't have a one-week meeting. We have a three-weeks meeting. We have the prep

meeting, and then we have the Board Workshop, and then we actually do have the meeting. This time, also looking forward to having a face-to-face or hybrid meeting.

The last thing I heard, that you can join but not being a technical organization as well. But I've actually got to be a little bit technical for a second, just to remind you of what ICANN actually do. Every time you go online, you hit something that technically originates from ICANN. We define the Internet, if you use the identifiers coming from us, IP addresses, domain names, and the IP protocol as the Internet. That's a very clear definition. That means that if you go on a social media platform, for instance, you leave the Internet and waltz into someone else's computer.

And that's important to remember. There is a definition of the Internet, especially when you hear of things like alt names or alternative Internet, it's never the Internet. ICANN is the organization assigned to do this important work. If you took out what we did, the Internet wouldn't function. It's fairly simple.

So now you think of yourself, coming into this, "That's a strange thing. How does this happen?" And it's partly history and partly because of decisions. ICANN was designed to have this role. We don't set the policies for the distribution—for instance, IP addresses. We don't set the policies for what we call country code operators. We do set policies for a particular part of the DNS. But

the most important part of what ICANN actually does is to do that—to provide everybody with Internet.

So now you might think, “Internet is done. It seems to be working.” And you go online. We have this call online. But the fact is, it's not done. The first matter is that we only have five and a half billion Internet users around the world. We still have about 50% of the world's population, primarily in Asia, Africa, and some parts of Latin America, who doesn't have access to the Internet today.

And we believe in the power of the Internet as we define it, in the sense that it brings people together—business opportunities but mostly people together—on one ... there's only one global community and that happens to be the Internet. And then everybody is engaged in this, from the Board, from the staff, and also the [inaudible] believes in that strength. There's things that actually change the way we interact and grow in society.

But then again, it works. What is the problem? So, first of all, the importance is that one of the important things we do right now, which is going to be really—I'm not supposed to call it but I call it anyway—the Internet 2.0. The Internet was designed ... And coming into ICANN, you will actually meet some of those people who designed the Internet from the beginning. They didn't think the Internet is going to be what it is. They even say so because

they constructed a system that—for instance, Latin script-based. Everybody speaks English. And you see still that in the technical things, how we do things.

One of the big things we need to work through now is to make sure that we can actually be more global and local at the same time because the Internet is global but it's also very local. Many of the interactions you have, it's actually surrounding ... I communicate with my daughter on Snapchat. I don't really know why but she told me that's how she communicates with me. She could be in the next room.

A lot of things we're doing in the next one is actually to make the Internet more local—to make sure that people around the world can use their own keyboard, their own scripts, their own community, their own narrative, to go online, instead of having all this Latin script. There's many reasons for that. You shouldn't need to read English, or French, or Spanish to be able to be active on the Internet itself.

But the other thing is also more substantial—the fact that if everybody continues to use mostly English as the Internet language, what happens with the languages around the world for the next three generations? Will the local languages actually disappear? I believe that differences are positive. And one of the positive differences is actually language because it's part of your

history, a part of who you are. And if we can't preserve that on the Internet, we're doing a bad job. That's one of the challenges we're now seeing. And I think that also will make it possible for people to be online in a different way. So we can go from 5 billion users to much more users around the world.

What I'm trying to say, we also have things that we do from a technical perspective. We have to continue to evolve the Internet technology behind it as well. This is not only nerd stuff. It's actually policy stuff because some of those things, as direct interactions—how we interact with the Internet itself.

Tell you something funny. We've been running this in different shapes and forms at ICANN for the last 22 years now—24 years, maybe. We ran the system for 35 years with no glitch. Can you think about any computerized system that works for 35 years without a glitch? In October–November last year, we had one of the biggest Internet days ever, with eight and a half trillion requests into the systems. That's going to continue to evolve. There's going to be more additions to, they call it, the Internet of things. They call it machine Internet. They call it a lot of things. And we have to continue to evolve to make sure that we can actually do this work. So there's a lot of work also on the technical side.

We also have to make sure that we maintain this open, interoperable Internet. There's a lot of challenges to it. You've seen governments asking us to do things that we don't want to do—to take down countries, to take down things. Technically, we can't do that, by the way. But literally, we shouldn't because we're there to preserve and make Internet possible. We're not there to judge who shouldn't have it. We're not into content. We're not into that. We only give the identifiers to people.

In a world that is more polarized, ICANN has to and continues to be this neutral point. We're supposed to deal with the Internet itself. Someone told me last week ... An ICANN Org staff member said something. One of the problems with what we've done is that it's been working for 35 years. So a lot of people is taking this for granted, "Hey. It works." And to some extent, it's like peace. To be able to maintain peace, you have to work on peace every day.

And to be able to preserve the interoperability of the Internet, we have to continue to make sure that we have this independent place in the world that actually does this work. No one controls us. No government control us. No single company control us. There's no individual controls us. We're controlled by you, coming into the ICANN community. That's an obligation we have as Internet users.

My really, really important thing is that when you come into this, we need you because you will provide, newcomers, and Next Generations, and Fellows, another perspective on the uses of the Internet. Your voice is important. Your voice is important to make sure that we do the things right and scrutinize what I do. But also making sure that we can make sure that we can leave an Internet behind for our kids, for the next generation, that is as good or even better than what we have today. The work is not done. Welcome to ICANN to help and to fix all the problems that exist by preserving the things that are good. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Goran. Thank you very much. And thank you for encouraging words to our NextGen and Fellows in welcoming to ICANN. There are several questions and I would like to ask first, Sokol, if you are still willing to go with your question. If yes, we can unmute you.

SOKOL HAXHIU: Yes, please.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Please go ahead.

SOKOL HAXHIU: You hear me?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Yes.

SOKOL HAXHIU: Great. Thank you, Siranush, for all the great work that you do with the Fellowship program and all the support that you have provided throughout the years. I have a couple of questions. The first one is how COVID has impacted the multistakeholder model and whether it has impacted in any way or shape. And the second is whether ICANN has had to get engaged or respond in any way or form to Ukrainians' invasion by Russia. Thank you.

GORAN MARBY: Should I answer?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Yes, please, Goran.

GORAN MARBY: I'm looking at my chairman. On the first question, ICANN Org, which is the legal entity that I am the President and CEO of, we are ... What are we now? 420–430 people. We actually do sit in like 35 countries. And we speak 55 languages or something, fluently.

We've always been a distributed organization in that sense because we also have to support ... We want to have a very inclusive but also a lot of different thoughts into how we, for instance, maintain the policy set by the community or how we support the community interactions with the Board.

I have to say that the technology has advanced a lot over the last two and a half years. When we did our first Zoom calls, it was a little bit of a ... We were among the first ones in the world who made some calls with 600–800 people. At the time, we felt like it was rubber bands to hold it all together. So I think we learned a lot and it's been positive as well.

But remember, in the multistakeholder model, it's a ways to a means to do what we're supposed to do. ICANN doesn't exist for the multistakeholder model. The multistakeholder is a governance structure for us. It's built on the fact that we actually have to meet sometimes. I think it's very hard to ... If you have trust, you can have that trust on when you meet on Zoom. But it's really hard to trust someone if you haven't smelled them. That's a very bad way of expressing it but I think you know what I mean.

On the Ukraine thing, we received a letter. So the invasion from Russia was on a Thursday. And I think on Monday or Tuesday, I received a letter from the Ukrainian Vice President with a request to take out the Russian and the Belarus, I think, country code from

the so-called root zone. And people were surprised that we could answer in 48 hours to decline that request.

And if you give me a second, I will tell you that it's not the first time we received that kind of request. Unfortunately, we live in a world where there are other wars where we get this request. So the answer is, heartfelt, really hard. I think everybody feels desperation over this. But we declined that.

Two reasons. The technology doesn't work that way. The technology is set up in a way that we provide and we can't take it back. So from a technology standpoint, it's impossible. Also, from a political standpoint, ICANN's task is to maintain—to make sure there is a route zone file that technically provides you with the Internet.

Think about this. ICANN is today the most trusted technical thing on the Internet. There is nothing that is more trustworthy. And why do I know that? It's because your computer goes to us every time. If your computer didn't trust the most central part to provide you the identifiers, it wouldn't work. So the fact that it does work means that we are trustworthy. If we break that trustworthiness, then we will have something that people talk about that doesn't exist with this Internet.

What we did do—what the Board did—was to ask us to ... This is the first time in history we provided—we gave to an organization

that helps within the Ukraine a million dollars, which ICANN never done before. And that was a decision that, if Maarten [wanted to comment on it], was the first time we did it. Personally, I have friends in Ukraine and I feel very sorry for it. I hope that answers your question

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Goran. And if I can request to speak a bit slowly next time when you take the floor for our interpreters. Appreciate it. And Leon, I see you want to add.

LEON SANCHEZ: Yes, Siranush, although I will switch to Spanish. Answering to the question related to how COVID might have affected the multistakeholder system, I would like to see this in a more positive way. As Goran was saying, the face-to-face interaction has no substitute, especially when we need to create bonds of trust, when we want to attempt to progress in issues that may be controversial or issues that may be delicate. I think that interaction—that personal interaction—is essential. And I'm really happy that we are going back to precisely interact face-to-face and we will have the opportunity to do this in The Hague.

However, we do need to remember something that I was told when I joined the Fellow program. And this is that most of the

work we do in ICANN does not happen during face-to-face meetings. It actually happens in the space that exists in between each of the meetings—in the intersessions, in the mailing list, the working groups, the discussion fora. And they have always been virtual.

And then I think COVID has, of course, impacted some parts, or some forms, or some ways in which we operate in our community. But I do believe it has given the opportunity for other stakeholders that did not have this opportunity to get involved, to engage intimately, because they thought that the work was only done in face-to-face meetings. So they had now the opportunity, with all the virtual meetings and with all the technology that the organization provided, to serve the community.

So they had this opportunity to get more involved and to see that even though this face-to-face interaction is essential for us as human beings, it is also true that the circumstances have forced us to somehow see that this can be a catalyzer—that the use of technology and the virtual media can become a catalyzer. That's why the impact of COVID is undeniable. But I like to see the positive part. And that part is that we are better integrated as a community when we work virtually.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Leon. We have several questions posted in the chat and I want to make sure we have time to go through them. So there is a question from Fidya who is asking, “How does ICANN embrace diversity—gender, cultural, industry, age, etc.—in terms of decision-making so that it is more of a steppingstone, rather than a stumbling block?” Who would like to take ... Goran?

GORAN MARBY: Should I start? And then I think Maarten could.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Yes, please.

GORAN MARBY: So in ICANN Org, we are today ... You can actually look at the CEO report, where every time we release it, we actually do talk about the gender perspective. We have, today, more women than men working in the ICANN Org. The executive team, if you take me out, it's 50/50. But that's one part of the equation.

As I mentioned before, we have people in 45 countries speaking 55 languages. That's another [inaudible]. And we actively seek people from different backgrounds into the ICANN Organization as well. We do that because we think that we need to understand the local needs as well. So that's ICANN or, the legal support

entity. Then you have also how we deal with it from an ICANN overall perspective. But I don't know, Maarten, if you want to speak because we have rules about, for instance, regional participation on the Board.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN:

Yeah. I think one thing is, in the bylaws, some rules are set. As Goran said, these are mainly related to the region's max five per region—five directors per region of the 16 voting directors. And we have 20 In total. But more importantly, I think that what you will find, getting more on board in this community, if we're actively striving towards diversity.

One thing is via the Fellowship program, which is a clear example itself, where we try to stimulate, in particular, also participation from people from the regions that are underrepresented. So that's one factor. The other thing is that the way we welcome people is also very much aimed at making it a welcoming environment where people can actively participate from wherever they come and they're welcome to do so.

Having respect for each other. One of the people in this call is actually our ombudsman, who participates to a diversity of calls to make sure that people treat each other with respect, which is a precondition for being able to be inclusive and diverse. So next to the bylaws and the actual reflection of diversity in the Org, as

Goran just sketched, I would say it's also a culture that we actively pursue and are committed to. And you will find more and more signs of that when you interact with us more.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. We will be able to take one more question and then I will ask our speakers just to say the brief closing for the session. So the next question was from Zaher, “How you can manage the time between your professional career and working as a volunteer in the ICANN community?” So I think Leon, you will—

GORAN MARBY: I think Leon is the best to respond to this.

LEON SANCHEZ: It’s magic. That's all I can say. It's magic. We have 48-hour days. So that allows us to dedicate enough time to our chores. Now, speaking seriously, as I was saying, when I was first introducing myself, time commitment is definitely something important, not only in terms of being a Board member, but in terms of being a volunteer that contributes to ICANN’s mission and to whatever we do in ICANN.

In the beginning, it might be very difficult to try to balance things and to try to find the time to allocate for the different duties that

you need to perform on a daily basis. But what I've learned is that discipline is a good ally. So you need to allocate time for each of the duties that you need to perform and stick to that allocation. So for example, in in my day-to-day, I allocate a certain time to dedicating work to my law firm. And also, I allocate some other time to dedicate to ICANN matters. And also, I allocate time for my family and for my children. And so you need to divide, literally, your day into hours that you allocate to each of the duties that you need to perform.

Again, it might be difficult at times. And that's also one of the challenges of holding virtual meetings because when you are abroad—in this case, in The Hague, where we are going to be—my clients understand that I'm not in the same time zone. And they don't expect me to reply or get back to them instantly. They provide me with space to get back to them. But when you are in a virtual meeting, you are still home. So clients actually expect that you come back to them as soon as feasible.

And yes, as Cheryl is saying, “Magic and a good bit of practice.” And I think that for that, she's the queen of practice, by attending most meetings, virtually and face-to-face. But yes. I would say that it's a skill that you learn to develop. So that's what I would say yeah, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Leon. And as we have only four minutes left, I would like to give the floor to our three presenters for the final closing remarks. And Goran, we probably will start with you.

GORAN MARBY: Thank you. I think I just want to reiterate some of the points I made. The Internet is not done. ICANN is not done. It's a constant evolution. We need new perspective and new ideas and points into it. When I hire new people to ICANN, I always have a meeting with them. And we talk about—and I often get the question, “What do you expect from me?” We often say that we expect them to make our voices heard from day one because we are entering ... One of the fantastic things but ICANN is that we are solving issues and looking at issues that no one in world history has ever challenged before because there's been no global interoperable Internet.

So often, despite the fact that you will hear, coming into the ICANN community, that there are simple solutions to any problem, there's not because some of the decisions we make, technically or policy-wise, will have an effect on all Internet users around the world. We need your voices. We are grateful for having you here. We are happy to have this many on this call because you can make a difference as a part of something.

ICANN is unique in the fact that we give everybody who comes in a place at the table in real decision-making, in negotiating, consensus building, and working together. I would say that it's one of the few decision-making bodies in the world that people literally can walk off the street into an ICANN meeting, go up to the microphone, and have his voice heard, and actually be listened to. So don't be shy. Don't take all the acronyms as something negative. We need you. Thank you very much.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Goran. Maarten, please.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Yeah. Thanks for that. Let me use my two minutes first to answer Siva's question, which was the very first question—whether there's unlearning to do before you engage. I don't think so, Siva. I truly don't think that any of this is to unlearn things. It's about taking what you know, to learn about ICANN and how you can contribute best, and to be there with an open mind, and listen to each other, and bring in the perspectives of what you have learned and what you are convinced of.

So I think this is also the key to us all. Respect opinions from anybody. Listen to everybody. And have your own opinion. And make sure that you fit it where it needs to fit. In terms of

commitments, the very last question because that closes the loop so nice, as Leon said, finding the way between the day job and whatever you are able and willing to commit to ICANN, be realistic. And if you would be on the Board, you need to take out more time. You need to be able to allocate more time. If you're in a volunteer community, you can take on as much as you can.

And I would certainly, for newcomers, for people who just started to get a feel for this big community where we make such a difference to the world, don't take a too-big bite of the appl. Try to focus and do something very well before you commit to too much and not deliver anything because that will really help us most. And gradually, you'll find your way and contribute, to your best stability, to this bigger good that we all support.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Maarten. Leon, if you can add also the call for action for ICANN74.

LEON SANCHEZ: Yes. Once a Fellow, you're always a Fellow. So it's a little bit like Hotel California, right? You can never leave. So I think that as Fellows, as I said previously, [inaudible] privileged. And that privilege also encompasses responsibility. So we have the

responsibility to give back to the ICANN community when we are privileged this way of being Fellows.

So I think the call to action is to get involved and participate in as many sessions as you are able to in this face-to-face meeting that we are going back for the first time in two and a half years. For those who are able to attend, please reach out to people in the corridors. Please reach out to people in the working rooms. Don't be shy to raise questions. Remember that there are no dumb questions, only dumbs that don't ask them. So speak up, participate, contribute. And as I said, I'm here for you and happy to help you in any way that I'm able to. Thank you, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Thank you, Leon, very much. Thank you, Maarten. Thank you, Goran. And thank you, Leon, for being with us with this wonderful group of people whom we are looking forward to see in The Hague very soon. I wish everyone a safe journey to The Hague. And also, with closing the session, I would like to thank our interpreters and tech support for the another great session during the Prep Week. With that, our meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: And thanks to you, Siranush, and your team.

LEON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]