
ICANN76 | Prep Week – Registrant Program Update
Monday, February 27 2023 – 18:00 to 19:00 CUN

JUSTIN HO: Hello and welcome to the Registrant Program Update Session. My name is Justin ho, and I am a participation manager for the session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN expected standards of behavior. During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A Pod. Participants may access interpretation via the Zoom toolbar. All are welcome to use the chat. Any message sent by a panelist or a standard attendee to another standard attendee will also be seen by the session's host, co-hosts, and other panelists. With that, I will hand the floor over to Brian Gutterman.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Thank you so much, Justin. And good day, evening, or good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining today's session. This is the, I believe, the fourth and final ICANN76 Prep Week session of today. I hope you've found these sessions interesting and that you will be able to join some of the sessions throughout the rest of the week. They are a really great opportunity for you to prepare for ICANN76 in Cancun whether you are traveling there in person or remotely participating online.

So today I'm joined by three ICANN work colleagues of mine: Justin who you just heard of who will be our participation manager today; Leticia Castillo from our Contractual Compliance function; and Lamar Faulkner from our Global Support team. Thank you, colleagues, for being with

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me today. As a reminder, as Justin said, today's session is being recorded and will be accessible after the fact or for those who aren't able to join us live today. So please do share recordings after the fact with colleagues or friends who might be interested in this update and this content as we would like to get this out to as many folks as possible. A big thanks also to our interpreters and to our technical meetings team who make these sessions possible.

Next slide please, Justin.

So to begin, we'll start with—can you go back to the agenda please, Justin? Thank you. So just about the agenda before we get started, at the top I'll talk a little bit about the registrant program and our general sort of services and support that holistically ICANN Org has for domain name holders, for registrants themselves. Although we have had a number of sessions, presentations and the like over the last couple of years really since we last had a Prep Week webinar, we want to talk just a little bit about the program, what we do, why we're here.

I really want you all participating today to think about as we go through the presentation if you have feedback or ideas about topics that you'd like to learn more about. It could be anything related to domain name holders, to registrants. If you are a registrant, if your organization has a domain name, if you are just curious and you think from where you sit whatever region that is, if you participate already in an SO or an AC under the ICANN structure, think about topics and feedback that you'd like to give to me and to my colleagues here about other topics that might be of interest to you moving forward because part of this session really is to focus on getting feedback from the community because

these sorts of presentations, the content we're going to be talking about today, is for the community, is for our stakeholders.

We are going to touch upon two recently published educational materials pretty quickly again. We are going to have Lamar speak to some data and information on registrant issues and challenges from the Global Support perspective. You'll learn a little bit more about what Global Support does as well. We have a new resource page that we'll touch upon for folks who need help, registrants or not, who come to ICANN.org, and then compliance, and then again we'll be asking for feedback. So that is our agenda.

Next slide please, Justin.

So just a bit at the top here, throughout all of our ICANN work, we serve the global public interests, registrants, and end users by ensuring a secure and stable DNS, Domain Name System, while promoting trust, choice, and competition in the industry. Before the registrant program was started nearly six years ago to today and moving forward, we always recognize domain name holders or registrants as being essential to a robust DNS and marketplace, but more can be done always, right, to improve their experience when interacting with the organization in different ways. And these sorts of presentations and getting feedback from you all, the stakeholders, is how we want to improve.

Next slide, please.

So [a bit about] our goals. And I think what you'll see in this presentation is that the goals that are listed here are really sort of bearing fruit, if you will, during this presentation. Education is first so educational content,

FAQ's, graphics, one-pagers that we'll be talking about later, presentations, capacity building webinars, things like that. We want to educate registrants as best we can about their rights and responsibilities, the ecosystem and how to navigate it and the ICANN policies that impact them, best practices for how to manage domain names, information about ICANN policies that impact registrants. Please go to [ICANN.org/registrants](https://icann.org/registrants). I think we can plug that link into the chat here. Lots of good content can be found there. And again, if you are browsing there and you see a void and you think there is a topic that could be better covered in some way, please do give us feedback.

Secondly, we want to identify and raise awareness about issues and challenges that registrants face, are impacting registrants in different ways in different regions, whatever it is. So this presentation you'll see we're going to show some data from what we hear from registrants. Some examples from our Global Support team and from our Contractual Compliance team as well. So these are some of the issues that they are hearing about but, again, we'd love to hear from registrars, from folks in the industry about what they think the biggest issues are and challenges facing registrants and kind of have a feedback loop with the community.

Then we also want to ensure that registrant perspectives are reflected in ICANN Org's ongoing work, services, and reviews, and that includes the policy work itself. We want to always flag that it is important to get a full spectrum of multi-stakeholder participation in ICANN PDP's, in reviews, at ICANN meetings whenever there is an open microphone. We always want to invite everybody to participate there in different ways.

Whatever perspective you're bringing, and that includes domain name holders themselves because clearly they play an important role.

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Really quickly, I spoke a bit earlier that we have had some presentations of late and sort of different community engagements. We've been invited by community stakeholder groups to participate in certain sessions, and we always love to collaborate, and we'd like to do more of this.

So a couple of examples. The AFRALO group, the African Regional At-Large Organization, did a really good capacity-building webinar series last year. We were lucky enough to be a part of that talking about registrant rights and responsibilities and a bit about ways to protect domain names. We were at the Asia Pacific Domain Name System Forum. We participated along with a couple of ICANN board members actually on a panel during ICANN73 online on protecting the rights of registrants and end users for a secure and stable DNS. That was a really interesting discussion. We were at the Africa IGF, the Africa Domain Name System Forum at the end of last year. And actually just last week we did a presentation, a capacity-building webinar of such, a training series for the Europe, Africa, and Middle East Region in cooperation with our Global Stakeholder Engagement team.

So we're always open to collaborating on things like this, and we invite again the community at large to engage with us if there is a session like this that you'd be interested to hear more about registrant issues and challenges and move forward together on some of these issues.

Next slide, please.

Okay, quickly, I think hopefully Justin can plug, please Justin, two links to new content we've developed recently. The first which you see here on this slide is the one-pager. This is being translated actually as we speak, so this will be available in all six UN languages. But it is things to think about when registering domain names. So this is actually a piece for prospective domain name holders, those who haven't registered yet but are thinking about registering a domain name, and we offer some tips and best practices.

Again, please go take a look at this. I won't go through it verbatim but, in summary, what this piece of content says and suggests is that if you're thinking about registering a domain name, do a little bit of homework. Read the terms and conditions of the various sort of options that you have in terms of registering domain names with the thousands of registrars that are out there. We recommend dealing with an ICANN accredited registrar, and we recommend finding a registrar that fits your purpose.

We think it's a good practice to just understand how you'll be able to get in touch with your registrar should something come up. This seems obvious you know. From our perspective at ICANN Org we hear a lot of times from registrants that they registered domain names and everything seems fine for a while and then something goes wrong. And for whatever reason, they have a hard time getting the answers they needed or getting the actions that they need to figure out their problems or their questions with their registrar. So make sure you have a good communication channel with whatever registrar you choose so

you can get the customer support that you need because these domain names, once you have them, whatever they are for, they are valuable assets to you, to your business, to your friends and family, to your modes of communication. So that is what this piece of content emphasizes, and we hope that you will have a look at this and, again, share it with your friends or colleagues or those who are interested.

Next slide please, Justin.

Thank you. And this is a follow-on to even the registration piece. It's about who to contact if you need help with your domain name. Again, this might seem simple, but ICANN Org, we really cannot help unfortunately when it comes to maintaining and directly helping registrants with their domain name management. We can do our best to point registrants in the right direction depending on their question or issue. But what this says is if you need help, contact your registrar. If it's a web hosting issue, contact your web hosting provider. But, again, understand how to find your registrar, understand how to contact them, and that's really how you're going to get help with your domain name. Again, this is a kind of general best practice that we like to emphasize whenever we talk about registrant rights and responsibilities and best practices when managing domain names. But the purpose of this content and, again, we're getting this translated so keep an eye out. We'll be sharing this kind of stuff on social media once it's translated, but these are really important points we like to make. And I think following some of the guidelines in both of these pieces of content will go a long way in helping you as a registrant avoid problems later on.

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Okay. With that, I am going to pass the Zoom microphone to my good friend and colleague, Lamar Faulkner. Lamar, please go ahead.

LAMAR FAULKNER:

Great. Thank you, Brian. I appreciate it. Good evening, afternoon, morning depending on where you all are. As stated, my name is Lamar Faulkner, and I am the Director of Global Support.

So just to give you a brief synopsis for a summary of Global Support. So we provide responses and support, if you will, to the general Internet community, contracted parties and, of course, registrants. So what we're going to review now on the next few slides are content and detail specific to our interactions with the registrant community.

Next slide please, Justin.

So when you consider the typical profile as what we have learned as a registrant, most, if not all, registrants consider their website obviously as a critical component of their business or their operating model that often has direct impact to their revenue or to something of value. We have come to find out that many are considered small- to mid-size business owners. And of course, obviously, because it does impact or come to having bottom line impact so to speak, when they do reach out to us, we have seen generally a more heightened sense of urgency and criticality obviously to address whatever their concerns or their challenges might be. The inquiries that we do receive from registrants, they originate from around the world. We do provide support and

receive these inquiries obviously 24/5. We are open 24 hours a day five days a week. Then we found, too, that a lot of the registrants, or again one facet of the profile, is that there is a general deficiency as far as in having domain name management knowledge. One of the I guess more comical things is because of some of the lack of knowledge regarding the ecosystem of the Internet or the Internet community, they're not always sure exactly who ICANN is, what ICANN does. And, of course, having heard of some of the I would say slogan terms or names, and we often get those kind of random calls or contacts that are, "Hey my Internet is slow. Can you fix it?" So we see that a lot as well, but that kind of makes up or summarizes if you will the typical profile of a registrant from a Global Support perspective.

Next slide please, Justin.

Now this slide again just to highlight, it focuses directly on interactions just with the registrant community. So when registrants do typically reach out to us, the driver that normally causes them to reach out, it results either from random Internet searches again just trying to get either some questions or resolutions to some challenge or conflict, the Contact Us link on the ICANN.org website or webpage, or referrals from registrars and resellers, or the ICANN Complaints Office. And when they do reach out, it's either by call or by email and sometimes even by both at the same time as far as getting in contact with us.

When you consider just the overall volume if you will of the registrant community in terms of the types of cases that we would see, looking at the calendar year for 2022, you can see we received approximately 7400 cases from registrants. Now something to always keep in mind, the

volume that we receive is completely unpredictable, right? So we don't align with the retail market where we have seasonality to our volume. Volume can be up one year, down the next one, up one week, down the next week and so it's very unpredictable. But obviously our goal and our objective and our aim is to always provide quick and prompt responses you know regardless to what the volume is.

Of that 7400 cases for 2022 for registrant cases, we've kind of broken them up into five different groupings or categories, right?

So we have probably our largest one which is domain management, and that generally consists of like renewals, transfers, cancellations, general domain inquiry. And that comprises or makes up about 60% of that 7400 case types or inquiry types that we received in 2022.

Then the one that's closely following but still a large difference would be WHOIS. So obviously when we have cases involving WHOIS, it's really WHOIS verification, WHOIS inquiry. And then we have 12% for content. Content speaks of fraud, scam, fishing website content specifically.

Then we have about 9% for our rights protection and trademark clearing house, and that involves trademark infringement, domain ownership, acquisition, things of that nature.

And then we have a category of about 5% that's miscellaneous. Obviously it doesn't fall within those four major categories that we've listed. But then within our miscellaneous category, we can have anything from complaints, issues with registrars, and things that again fall outside of scope. Kind of like I made the light humor on, again, "Fix my Internet speeds." So all of that kind of falls in there. So this gives us

just kind of a general synopsis of what the volume looks like that relates specifically to registrants.

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So as Brian also mentioned, there is also a new slide or a new landing page that we have created, the ICANN I Need Help Page. This was recently refreshed and reorganized as kind of a single landing page for those who're seeking assistance. Now it is not specific to registrars. Anyone that needs support or help can actually visit this page, but we have found it to be a very valuable resource and tool for our registrant community. It's easy to find. It also has been translated into the UN six. And on this page, you can navigate at your own speed, submit questions, concerns, complaints. Like I said, it really takes you to a wealth of knowledge and information that we have.

Then in the event or in the case, hey—you're on there, you're looking around, "I still can't find what I'm looking for," there is an option to actually go to the URL or the button that says, "I need to talk to someone." Then of course you can reach out to global support through that interface either by email or provide you a phone. Of course, if you are a contracted party, you can actually open up a case right then and there as well. So again we do invite and hope that you would, if you've not done so already, definitely visit the page, take a look at it and check it out. As Brian said, we always welcome feedback to try to make your experience with Global Support as memorable and as good as possible. Alright? And that is all for me so thank you. So now I will hand this off to my colleague, Leticia.

LETICIA CASTILLO:

Thanks, Lamar. Hi, everyone. This is Leticia Castillo with Contractual Compliance. In Compliance, we monitor and ensure that ICANN's contracted parties comply with ICANN's policies and agreements, and [inaudible] enforcement actions resulting from external complaints but also from proactive monitoring and audit-related activities. With this in mind, we can go to the next slide please. Thanks.

In 2020, the compliance team moved to a new case processing system which allows us to collect more data on complaints that we process. This includes what we call the reporter type. We ask each person submitting a complaint to us to identify themselves from a drop-down list which includes different groups such as law enforcement, IP lawyer, or registrant, either former or current at the time of submission.

And as a result, we can provide additional data such as approximately 21% of all complaints we received last year were submitted by self-identified registrants or their representatives, specifically registrants for the domain names that were the subject to the complaint. These registrants primarily reported issues related to transfers. An example of the most common case comprises a self-identified registrant who wants to transfer a domain name from one registrar to another and needs the AuthInfo code which is a password that enables the transfer. For the change to proceed, the domain must also be unlocked. In this example, the registrar indicates to us through the complaint that the registrar is not providing the code or not removing the lock. And there are requirements to the policy that we enforce pertaining to these two items, the provision of the code and removal of the lock.

A lesser number of complaints submitted by registrants concerned domain renewal issues and abuse. An example of a renewal complaint entails a domain name that wasn't renewed despite being paid for or a registrant who wasn't aware the domain name was expiring in the first place. Again, there are related requirements in the policies that we enforce.

Abuse complaints submitted by registrants are largely invalid or misfiled. People do not report their own domain names were abused. Rather, they say for instance, they took the money and did not renew the domain. This is abuse. So the complainant in this example is confused as to how the issue reported fits within our policies and within our [inaudible]. It is not a complaint in this example under the provisions of the agreement which cover abuse report handling so we will move it from abuse to renewal and address it there.

Approximately 26% of the invalid complaints that we closed last year were submitted by self-identified registrants. These complaints commonly involved country code top-level domains which are not within our scope because ICANN does not accredit registrars or set policy for ccTLD's. In other invalid complaints, the complainant did not include evidence of being the registrant and/or having contacted the registrar or reseller for assistance. For example, in the submission the complainant asked us, ICANN, to provide them with the AuthInfo code or to renew the domain or to transfer the domain. To these complainants, we either explain why the complaint is not within our scope and provide them with any helpful information. We can assist them, for example, we provide them with the details of the ccTLD

manager or tell them we do not have access to AuthInfo codes or any means to produce them, but this is how you can contact the registrar for assistance and let us know if you still need help after that. Or if the complaint is fully [formed] and refers to an obligation we enforce and to a party we have enforcement authority over, we start the process with the registrar which takes me to the next slide.

The numbers I am sharing here do not comprise all the cases we had across all policies and agreements last year, just those that corresponded to the largest number of registrant submissions. I just wanted to make sure that is clear.

With that in mind, last year we initiated 343 new cases with registrars under the transfer policy and 113 renewal cases. Each case generally comprises several communications with the registrars through an established process that is linked there, and entails an informal stage through which most cases are resolved, and a formal stage that may result in the suspension or termination of the registrar's accreditation with ICANN.

We resolved 339 transfer cases and 96 renewal cases. Most of these were closed because the registrar demonstrated compliance. The code was provided, the transfer completed, the domain renewed.

Additionally, last year in November, Compliance launched a new registrar audit round. The audits entail the review of information and data collected from 15 auditees]and includes the policies that set forth renewal and transfer requirements under which we processed most registrant cases as I said before.

Finally, Compliance also provides input and data on complaints received and their resolution to policy and working groups at ICANN. Here are some examples from the last year. Again, not the only ones, but those related to transfer or renewals, the most common registrant complaints. We have subject matter experts for the ongoing transfer policy review PDP. And another example as part of the [GNSO] review of the policies covered under renewal obligations, they requested our input and data, and we produced a report for them containing nine years of metrics and observations.

And this is all for me. At the bottom of the slide there is a link to the Compliance page. Please check it out when you have a moment. Also, tomorrow, at 23:00 UTC, 3:00 PM PST, the Compliance team will be conducting our normal program update as part of the pre-ICANN76 Prep Week with enforcement actions details. So please join us if you can. That's all, thanks. Back to Brian.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN:

Thank you so much both of you, Lamar and Leticia, for that information. As a reminder, you will be able to find the full deck including the links within the deck that you're seeing here in the presentation I believe on the sched page that we're using for Prep Week. So wherever you found this link to participate today, the deck will be there. You can go through all these numbers and the data that was shared already in more detail. Before I continue, please, if you have questions, again I ask for sort of ideas and feedback at the beginning. If you have some ideas or other topics you think should be covered by the program that we should address in some way at future sort of sessions like this, please plug

them into the Q&A or the chat and we'll note those down. Even if you're not a registrant, a domain name holder yourself. It could be something you think is important for you as a newcomer or somebody who has been involved in ICANN for a long time, or if you are part of an SO or an AC already, please give us some feedback.

We have some time here. I want to thank Leticia for raising these last two points that you see here on the slide about how Compliance has helped out in forming the transfer policy review PDP which is ongoing. Important to note I think, that group will probably be convening discussing, if somebody can correct me if not, at ICANN76 coming up. There are always ways to contribute, right, to these discussions in different ways whether as public comments, getting involved in these sorts of reviews and processes. These topics on transfers and renewals or domain name management asks. There are ICANN policies that obviously directly dictate how registrants can do these things that Compliance enforces. The Council as Leticia said, the GNSO, is considering currently among other things sort of reviewing again the expired domain deletion policy and the expired registration recovery policy. Again, these are policies that could potentially be of great help to registrants should they forget to renew their domain names which is unfortunately something that happens a lot still.

Again, these are two good tangible sort of examples of topics that directly impact registrants. They are topics that Org is helping support, but most of the community is helping move along in different ways, to improve we would hope the transfer process, the renewal processes for

not only domain name holders or registrants but also registrars and others involved in the community, other actors that play a role there.

Next slide please, Justin.

I think that is—we are pretty much done with our presentation. I guess just talking a little bit about our next steps. We are going to continue to create educational content. Again, it could be sort of the one-pagers that we presented earlier on sort of more generic topics, perhaps some more detailed content on ICANN policies themselves. We want to continue our community engagement and collaboration, so we want to be a partner with folks in the community who are talking about these issues. We want to be able to provide subject matter expertise to discussions, provide reviews and input into various discussions that are happening across the community on topics related to registrants. We always want to sort of carry our flag as sort of a partner when the community is discussing these topics in different ways. As I was saying before, if you are a registrant and you're interested in registrant topics, please participate in a variety of ways. At ICANN76 coming up, at the policy forum later on in the summer in D.C., join an SO or an AC if you haven't already. If you're a newcomer, there are lots of ways to participate in policy views and such. So please be active, ask questions. I will be at ICANN76 in person, so please come find me. I will be walking the halls and available. I would love to talk to folks, newcomers and long-time ICANN'ers alike so please do approach me. We'll be continuing to publish things as we go.

I want to give the floor now to our participants. I've not seen anything in the Q&A or in the chat. Maybe a final word I would like to give first to

Lamar and then Leticia. Is there anything else you want to close with? Thank you for previewing your session tomorrow, Leticia, for your compliance update, but any last words from either of you?

LAMAR FAULKNER: Thanks for the opportunity man. I appreciate it, Brian.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: All right. Without any comments or questions, I want to thank the interpreters. Again, remind you all to please share these links to the recordings and transcripts of this session once they are ready. They will be ready shortly after this. Thanks to everybody who makes these happen, who makes these sessions inclusive, to the interpreters. And I hope some of you will be able to join some of the Prep Week sessions the rest of the week and join us in person or online for ICANN76 in Cancun. And that is it from me, so with that we will close the session and thank you all for participating.

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