ICANN76 | CF – Joint Session: ICANN Board and NCSG
Monday, March 13, 2023 - 15:00 to 16:00 CUN

MATTHEW SHEARS: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to Cancun and welcome to this session of Joint Meeting of the ICANN Board with the Non-Commercial Stakeholders Group. We've got an hour and we've got a very full agenda. I'll turn it over to Tomslin to make a couple of introductory comments and then we'll jump right in.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Matthew. My name is Tomslin. I'm not the NCSG Chair, but I'm sitting in for Julf who is, unfortunately, sick today. So I'm hoping he is joining us from his hotel room. We appreciate you meeting the NCSG members today in Cancun, considering that we have a very long agenda.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Tomslin. I suggest that we go to the Board's question first, if that's okay. And then we'll go through the questions from NCSG and we'll see how many we can get through in the time that remains. So, a question from the Board is in front of you. I'll read it without taking too much time: The ICANN Board would like to explore how to combine the efficiencies of an agile approach to problem solving, like the Council's small teams with the need for accountability and transparency, to make progress on policy conversations. When would such an approach be most appropriate? And how can we ensure it does not circumvent required steps in a policy development process? We very much welcome comments from NCSG.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thank you, Matthew. The NCSG met yesterday and had a conversation about this question, and we have a statement we would like to use to address that question. The NCSG welcomes efforts by the Board to identify innovative approaches to improve the policymaking process. We understand that it can be useful to try different ways to overcome some of the bottlenecks that frequently inhibit progress on the many important issues we face.

Nevertheless, as the Board here today reminded us, inclusivity and diversity are a foundational principle of ICANN and the existing policymaking structure is designed to protect that. We are concerned that some of the recent forays into agile approaches have not always respected the foundational concepts of balanced representation and transparency, including full disclosure of participants' interests and open meetings.

We are open to new ideas as long as they respect these basic principles and lead back to already established mechanisms at the core of ICANN's multi-stakeholder decision making process. The NCSG will strongly resist any effort to undermine the policymaking mechanisms articulated in the bylaws. We observe that by refraining from reopening settled decisions and policy recommendations and not adding layers of implementation and enforcement processes such as ODA, will drive policymaking to conclusions. That is the NCSG's response to the question. Thanks.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Okay, thanks, Tomslin. I don't think it was the intent of the question to suggest that we, the Board, would be supportive of processes that would undercut the multi-stakeholder process and policy development processes. I don't know if there are other Board members who would like to jump in on our question that we posed to NCSG, or some others from NCSG who would like to add?

FARZANEH BADIEI: I'm Farzaneh Badiei, Non-commercial Stakeholder Group. I think that the Board in these meetings for the past maybe three years, you had one question that came up -- how can we make ICANN processes more effective and efficient? And for three years we were asked this question, but then when you look at the Board decisions -- and I know your hands are tied but -- a lot of the time the Board reopens issues and asks these clarifications, and then we have this elaborate enforcement in the implementation process. Things take years to happen.

So what we did with the accountability workstream, which was on jurisdiction and sanctions, that was like five years ago, we still have not come up with the implementation plan, even discussing it. So I think that the community should do its part. And we, of course, take your recommendations, we take them into consideration. But I think the Board has to also work on its own processes and how you're doing things and how you should refrain from reopening issues all the time. Thank you.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Would any of my colleagues like to take that one? Farzaneh, thanks. Edmon, go ahead.

EDMON CHUNG: I see a reciprocal question to us on this, so why don't we spend this time responding a little bit, if that's okay. I think that's a very good point. I will not necessarily represent the entire Board, so speaking personally, in some ways. But generally speaking, I think the reason why we ask this question is to understand that we don't want to step outside of the established mechanisms, and that's a very important part of ICANN itself. And in terms of reopening issues, I believe the Board tries very hard not to reopen issues.

However, I think from previous experience, what we have seen is that the Board does have a responsibility to work through everything and look at whether it is, for example, in the global public interests and take those into consideration. So there is a need for the Board to consider it and understand each of the recommendations before adopting it. So the idea is not to relitigate issues but it is important for the Board to discuss and understand the issues and then make a decision. So hopefully, that gives a better context. And I very much agree that we need to improve our processes, and we are. That's the reason why we ask the question, I think.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Edmon. And this is for all of us, if we can give our names before we speak, that's good. Kathy?

KATHY KLEIMAN: Thanks, Matthew. I think you should know there's a lot of concern here about this, about that an agile approach to problem solving may become an agile and informal approach to policy development. I think Farzaneh was telling us this. I'm not a big metrics person but I think this is a good time for some metrics for ICANN to track, for the Board to track what small teams are operating -- and I'm on one of them. So, what small teams are operating? How are they structured? How do we capture this so we can analyze it later and see did it work, was it bounded, where did it go afterwards? Even, who was on it? I'd just capture all of this because people aren't going to know what one hand is doing and what the other small team is doing. But all together in one place would be useful.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Anyone else? Back to you, Tomslin.

FARZANEH BADIEI: This is a question from Rafik and he's asking if the Board has KPI regarding the recommendations approval, and how long it takes to approve recommendations by the Board. Do you actually measure it yourself?

MATTHEW SHEARS: I think the answer is that we don't, as far as conferring with Tripti here as I see some shaking of heads around the table. So, no. Avri?

AVRI DORIA: I agree with the fact that we don't. But we do, for example, on one side on reviews, we have a bylaws requirement to answer within a certain amount of time but we do not have such a requirement on PDPs. And we've had a little bit of conversation lately -- we haven't developed it very far -- about whether we do need to impose that same time limit that we have for reviews on PDPs.

If I can add one thing about the small groups -- we don't do the small groups, it's that people do the small groups in response to us -- I think often there's a concern that we don't quite understand what we're getting and that we basically have two options. One is the old option of, well, we'll just figure out what we want to do and do it. And the other option has become, oh, my God, we can't take a chance on guessing wrong. And therefore, has swung the pendulum to the side that says, let's make sure we're 100% so that we don't misinterpret. And I think as this pendulum swings, we're still in a process of, let's hope we can get to a middle place where, if we're unclear, we can get clear, but we don't have to spend three years getting clear. Thanks.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Rafik, for the question. I don't see any more hands so I think we can leave our question and move to the first question from NCSG. Please.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Matthew. Our first question is, the GNSO Statement of Interest Taskforce that was put together by the Council has recommended that participants must disclose the identities of their clients or the employers they represent as a condition to participate in a working group. We understand there are some concerns in the committee about this, but we believe this should be done without exception to enhance the transparency and prevent group takeovers, and we were wondering what the Board's thoughts are on this?

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Tomslin. Maarten?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Tomslin, thanks for that. Well, we are aware that, of course, this topic is still under active discussion in the Task Force since 2021. And therefore, we're not going to opine on that as such, but we are willing to the point out that under the ICANN bylaws, ICANN and its constituent bodies shall operate to the maximum extent feasible in an open and transparent manner and consistent with procedures designed to ensure fairness. So that is a guideline that is embedded in the bylaws.

And to the extent it's helpful for the discussion, I'm also very happy to point at the Board's own policy there. Also, based on the bylaws and

Section 7.6, we feel that it serves us and that it helps us to be very clear when there's a conflict. In general, it's known, it's on the website, when there's a conflict for a specific topic, it's raised and brought to the open. So maybe that can inspire the discussion. Hope that's useful.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Maarten. I don't know if any NCSG member has any comment on this? I don't see any hands, I think we can move to the next question then. Our second question, has the Board reviewed the effectiveness of the implementation of ICANN's mandate during the COVID lockdown? How much money was saved by not traveling, and what were the impacts on policy effectiveness, outreach, and inclusion? Should ICANN continue to travel to the extent that it does? Given concerns for our carbon footprint, what do we gain and what do we lose with this attempt at global outreach, and are there better ways to meet with different regional populations and markets?

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks. We're going to go to Tripti and then Danko on this one.

TRIPTI SINHA: Thank you for the question. So indeed, we do track numbers and what kind of participation we have. And during COVID years when we went into lockdown, for sure our participation decreased and there was a general lull in our participation. Since we've returned, the request for meetings has increased quite a bit. And, in particular, for example, in India, where India has the largest number of IDN ccTLDs.

The interest there has grown and the stakeholder community would like to meet. And we've noticed quite a momentum and shift in the energy in getting things done. And we've noticed, indeed, that there is forward motion, and you've seen that with SubPro and other such activities that meeting in person is making a difference, but our studies continue. And in terms of financial numbers, I'm going to turn it over to Danko. He has some good numbers to share with you.

But it's hard to say what the impact was directly on policy development. That is still being looked at. But, for sure, our number of attendance went down and there was definitely a lack of participation, and now, the momentum is growing. And Sally, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think Kuala Lumpur and now here, the numbers have gone up steadily. Correct?

SALLY COSTERTON: Yes. The numbers were about consistent. What we've seen is a slight increase as a percentage in the face-to-face piece at this meeting. Kuala Lumpur and The Hague were almost exactly even in terms of face-to-face participation and online participation. We had 900 people participating online at Kuala Lumpur and The Hague, which is huge. But it's still going to be around 600-650 for this meeting. So this is important for this discussion, because certainly my planning assumption is that we need a resource for significant numbers of people staying online and leaning in. This is an opportunity, not at the expense of people coming face to face, but as well as. So I hope that's helpful in this particular question.

TRIPTI SINHA: And Danko will now share some numbers with us in terms of savings.

DANKO JEVTOVIC: Thank you, Tripti. Just a personal comment before we go into numbers. I think that the question of traveling is of course related to the environmental impact of ICANN, and this is a very important topic that the Board is aware of. It was started by the community and we will be looking into that and working into the next strategic plan. The Strategic Planning Committee that is headed by Matthew here is very much considering that. But on the numbers in particular, the yearly cost of the ICANN meetings was approximately $15 million.

So we had significant savings from this period that happened. And we managed to put $44 million into the reserve fund and we have created a special speaker fund for implementation of community recommendation. So we put $20 million into that fund. So our reserve fund level has increased and this is, I think, very good for stability and a very important aspect for all non-commercial organizations such as ICANN.

From this figure, we used $6 million for implementation of the specific community recommendations. But also, the remaining money of this fund is something that we will be considering for continuation of preparation for the SubPro. So I think these savings were very significant. But the Board is very careful about a good housekeeper for our funds for the coming years. We saved that money and we'll be using it to further our mission. Thank you.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Danko. Anybody else from the Board?

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: I think Stephanie has her hand up in the room online.

STEPHANIE PERRIN: Thank you. This was back on the first question. I wanted to comment in response to, I believe it was Maarten speaking. One of the concerns we have about the lack of enforcement of the SOI requirements is not so much conflict of interest but convergence of interests. If we permit some parties to participate representing clients anonymously -- that would be mostly lawyers who are claiming solicitor-client privilege -- there might be no limit on the number of representatives of a given company in a small group, in a PDP.

So we could have technical reps of a large multinational corporation, for instance, we could have lawyers who are representing them, and we could have various other representatives. And sometimes, some of these corporations, their interests don't jive with those of the multi-stakeholder community supporting ICANN. In other words, they're not particularly interested in [inaudible - 00:21:44]. Thank you very much.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Stephanie. I don't know if there are any other comments on the second question. I know that Stephanie was responding to the first question. All right, we'll move to the third question then. For the third question, I'd like to ask the Chair of NPOC to take that one.

RAOUL PLOMMER: Thanks, Tomslin. I assume you've read the question. You've seen it in different forms quite a few times. I would like to know if the Board knows the rationale for the CSG having four seats in the NomCom as opposed to one of each. Do you know the rationale of why they have four times more?

KATRINA SATAKI: Do you?

RAOUL PLOMMER: I've heard an explanation. I don't think calling it rationale is overselling it. But do you have any idea? Because we've been talking about this for seven years. NCSG has been wanting a seat for seven years. I don't know, maybe you did the work this time, had a look into it, why is it like that?

KATRINA SATAKI: Thank you very much. I'm Katrina Satechi, the Chair of the Board's Organizational Effectiveness Committee or OEC for short. This committee is responsible for the review and oversight of specific and organizational periodic reviews. And as you may know, there has been one of the organizational reviews of NomCom. An independent examiner who carried out the review gathered information from various SO/ACs and noticed that there is a general dissatisfaction with the way NomCom has been compromised.

The independent examiner issued a recommendation to address this question and rebalance NomCom This is so-called Recommendation No. 10 on the list of recommendations. NomCom 2 -- that's the second NomCom organizational review -- reviewed the implementation working group composed of community members. They also tried to implement all the recommendations including Recommendation No. 10.

However, their proposal was not accepted by the GNSO and they, in their final report, noted that at this point, they cannot come up with a satisfactory solution to the problem, which means that, basically, the Board this week on Thursday, is planning to approve the final report of the NomCom to review the implementation working group. But it doesn't mean that we want to sweep the problem under the carpet.

On the contrary, the Board is planning to ask Org to develop a plan -- and that's already happening, we're already thinking about that -- develop a plan, having several engagement sessions, probably meetings, may be some other forms, where we gather information and more feedback from the community, from SO/ACs, NPOC, of course, and try to come up with a solution that would work for all SO/ACs. So it's not just NPOC that is not happy, many SO/ACs are not happy. And we, as the community, together must look at this issue and we must discuss how to resolve it. Thank you.

RAOUL PLOMMER: No Board member knows the current rationale why there are four seats against one?

KATRINA SATAKI: There are seven seats against one. There are five seats against one. There is no balance on the NomCom. I don't know the rationale of how it all evolved. Maybe those who were here at the beginning know. Sorry, I do not know. I'm not surprised. I do not have an answer to this question. But it's clear that we will address this issue and I hope that within the next six months, we will have more clarity on expectations from the community.

RAOUL PLOMMER: Yeah, but what I know about it is that basically the CSG, the rationale for having four seats for the CSG as opposed to one for the NCSG -- which should be like equal counterparts -- is that the fourth seat, you could maybe reason that you'd have one for each constituency, but they actually have an extra one, which at the time they said that they require for representing the small businesses. And I find that ridiculous.

What I'm hearing now is that if we delay this further and further, this gets dragged to the holistic review. I personally don't want that. I've seen some reviews in ICANN, and just the sound of holistic review must be a decade long. So I think something should be done as soon as possible. And for them having that fourth extra seat that even them couldn't reason any better, that should be given to NCSG as soon as possible.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: I think due to time, we'll probably need to move on but we get what the Board is saying. I suppose the important thing here is that you intend to work on it and you're still working on it to get an outcome on the recommendations or report like you mentioned. So we'll move on to the next question so that we can address as many as possible. I don't know whether [inaudible - 00:29:39] hand is on the same point but very short, [inaudible - 00:29:46].

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Hello everyone. We fully understand the limitations with regards to the NomCom seating but as we said before -- I just wanted to put this on the record as well -- that's not necessarily just about adding chairs, one or two constituencies from the NCSG, but also enhancing civil society representation at the NomCom. Because at the end of the day, we want more diverse appointments. We want more diverse people in positions throughout ICANN, and so on and so forth. So I also wanted to add this side on the increase of diversity because it's also something both the Board and our part of the community have been talking a lot about in the past year. So thanks, Tomslin, for letting me come in at this point.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks. We'll move to the next question. On this question, we understand that there have been a number of updates since we sent this question to the Board, but we thought we'll still be interested in hearing from the Board regarding those incremental decisions which Tripti mentioned. Thanks.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Tomslin. I think Becky or Avri may want to take a stab at this.

AVRI DORIA: In fact, it's something that we're working on. We talked about it yesterday at a panel, and basically have gone through the many proposals, and many of them, we were ready to accept. With the others, there's issues to be talked about. Many of them have been issues that people have submitted comments about. And some of them are difficult issues that need to be resolved before there's an application guidebook. So that's basically the process that we're involved in at the moment.

Any of those issues that needed further discussion or that there was a certain amount of discussion that was still open issues where there was advice that was not quite yet balanced with recommendations and needed to be dealt with are things that went into that, deferring them and now opening up a plan to to talk about them further to try and get those resolved. So it's quite simple in that basic application, but those are the complicated issues that still need to be discussed.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Becky, please.

BECKY BURR: The use of the term incremental may be a little bit not quite right. Because I think it's a waterfall, we're going to work on a lot of different issues as we go along. So I think of it more as a set of cues that need to be worked on in different ways as opposed to incremental, if that helps.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Becky. It certainly does. Considering that, like I mentioned, we've heard and followed the updates that have been coming. We weren't sure what incremental means exactly, so we're interested in knowing. Thank you. We'll move to the next question on the list, which is regarding applicant support. And for this question now, I'd like to hand it over to Kathy.

KATHY KLEIMAN: Thanks, Tomslin. Before I read the question, I'd like to share with you that there's a program that NCSG has been participating in, a pilot project policy program called the ICANN Policy Transition. The Non-commercial Stakeholder Group has 17 students in this special program, and they're studying policy development -- and as a law professor, I like this -- through the case study of one policy, and that's applicant support. And they're diving deeply into the history of applicant support and some of the key issues. Hopefully, we'll be making new leaders who will help us through some of the issues to come. And the students come from all over the world.

So I'd like to introduce the participants who I understand are here at ICANN76, it's a small subset. If you're in the room, please wave or stand. Benjamin Akinmoyeje, Emmanuel Vitus, [inaudible - 00:35:17] and Namra Naseer. And I'd like to acknowledge the leader of this pilot program, Melissa Allgood who is here.

Terrific, so on to our question. Applicant support is a topic near and dear to the heart of the Non-commercial Stakeholder Group. The subsequent procedures ODP, or operational design phase, suggested that the applicant support programs start 18 months prior to the anticipated opening of the application submission period. The ODA also offered two options for implementing the SubPro output where option two would require only 18 months of implementation.

While the GTP continues its work, it seems impossible to incorporate the applicant support program in time for the next round in the aggressive timeline of option two. We appreciate ICANN Org's effort in mitigating risks and enhancing efficiency by developing option two. But the Non-commercial Stakeholder Group feels strongly that the next round will be unfair if we open it without a meaningful and genuinely effective applicant support program.

And I can add from my own outreach to indigenous peoples in North America, three years -- these outreach programs should be as long as possible, even if we don't have all the details, but to begin to familiarize them and get them ready so when the actual details come down, both the applicant guidebook and the applicant support program, they're ready to go. I think we can start earlier and have a launch pad. But I know lots of people here have other thoughts and concerns as well. So let me present the question, and thank you.

AVRI DORIA: Yes, you're absolutely right. And I think that one of the considerations that we had, we've moved away from the option one, option two, and looking more for what is an optimal solution given the various needs -- everything from the automatization to the manual, to the time it takes for outreach, to the time it takes for applicant support. So I think that the notion that yes, we need enough time is something that that was accepted and was one of the drives -- not the only driving, don't want to go that far, but it was certainly one of the driving considerations in let's look at our schedule and make sure that we're as quick as we can but that we make sure that we have time for the things we have to have time for.

BECKY BURR: Thank you, Avri. What she said. I don't have anything to add. Sally may have something on the outreach.

SALLY COSTERTON: Not really, I'm sorry. Yes, I think we need to make sure that, as much as possible, we support all the platforms that are going to help us to work most effectively. And that is going to change over time. So it's what I said in my opening comments in the opening ceremony, please keep talking to us and asking for help and working with us. Because what I don't want to do is to set up lots of new fixed programs for the sake of it.

I think the priority is, as I said in my comments this morning, we've learned so much in the last three years about what works and what doesn't work that I don't want us to get stuck in some of our not all thinking is all bad but we have to evolve. And this example that you're bringing to us, Kathy, is a particularly good example of what you were introducing the participants. This is a pilot program. This is a very interesting example of trying something new and making sure that we apply the resources appropriately. So I hope that's helpful. But otherwise, I'm very much in agreement with the discussion.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Sally. Kathy and Melissa, I think that Avri and I spoke on the program, your new program. It was a very enjoyable experience. Thank you, and I really commend the initiative. Also, congratulations, and welcome to all those who are participating. Thanks.

KATHY KLEIMAN: Can I follow up with a quick question? Who should we talk to about ideas about soft launches starting early, concerns that we have as they arise, because we now have a large group working on this at Non-commercial Stakeholder Group. Thank you.

SALLY COSTERTON: The short answer, in my view from an operational standpoint, is David's team, the team you're working with now. So the support team from David Olive's team, the policy support team is the best first start, which is what you did in this program. And this is exactly what Melissa has been doing. Is that what you mean?

KATHY KLEIMAN: The policy teaching process is very different from the applicant support policies and our concerns about those that are going into place. I kind of linked them, but one's training, mentoring, and guiding. One is we've got real concerns about the timelines on applicant support, that there's not enough time to get people in. Aubrey is much more of an expert, having done this 10 years ago actively. But very concerned that we may be launching the applicant support program without enough time for it to be an effective program. That's the underlying policy issue.

SALLY COSTERTON: Sorry, Kathy. Yes, I have to slightly separate things from the same conversation. Yeah, I get that. And I think, frankly, the answer to that lies in the discussion between the Board and the Org, because the timing and the decisions around how the precise details of the next round will be decided on is up to the Board. Obviously, I'm sitting on the Board and I'm participating in this discussion. So, if you like, I'm having a conversation with myself.

I don't want to be facetious, but the key point here is, as you say, there's a strategic decision to be made about the timing of the applicant support program. And that, in my mind, is part of the overall decision of the Board's resolutions, and what order things are decided in. And I'm going to look to Becky to tell me if she would agree with that view. Yes, you would. Okay, I just want to make sure I give a clear steer and not speak on behalf of the Board without their agreement.

What I can say very clearly is once the Board has decided that, then it's my responsibility in the CEO role to make sure that we've prepared our resources appropriately inside the organization to implement that decision. And that discussion has to happen. Because you're right, it is a sequencing discussion, but it's part of the bigger discussion about the sequencing of the decisions around the implementation of the second round as a whole.

If that sounds like me delaying it, it's not meant to. It's about being joined up in our thinking about, let's get the decision made first, the Board resolutions done first. And that unlocks the key to the resources that I have available inside the organization. But what I can say, as I said this morning in my opening comments, we're ready to go. We're not going to then come back and say, oh, but we need another this long and that long and something else has happened. It's not like that. Is that helpful?

KATHY KLEIMAN: That is very helpful, as is the idea that we'll be following up. Thank you.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Okay, I've got Edmon and Maarten.

EDMON CHUNG: Kathy, at least for myself, I'm very clear about the issue and I care about it very much. And last time round, though, if you recall, the applicants program was put in place much later. And that caused the issue that the general outreach part didn't get to include the applicant support until later. But this time around, I think it will be a little bit different, because as we discussed some of the some of the included -- we expect to and hope to get resolved and put into implementation includes the applicant support program already.

The Org has been starting the communications program and planning already. And this will certainly be, I believe, part of it, including things like IDNs as well -- that last time round that was also not very front and center -- that will also be more front and center. So, hopefully, this time around, as Sally mentioned, this will go out at the same time as the general outreach as well.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Yes, indeed. It does have a high priority in our discussions. And yes, we did learn from the last time, because of reasons we all know about. It was a bit late. One thing I take away from what you said is, well, maybe we need to have all the answers before we start and that's an interesting thought as such.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Maarten. I think we have Rafik online.

RAFIK DAMMAK: Thanks, Tomslin. [inaudible - 00:45:11] further clarification regarding how the Board will take into account the GGP recommendation. The question was raised at the GGP Working Group when we got a presentation from the GDS regarding the ODP and the question was raised. But I wanted to understand if the Board is closely following the discussion. I understand there is no reason to have a board liaison for the GGP as a particular process here but I was wondering if you're getting any follow up or update regarding GGP discussion that can help you, even if we are a little bit away from having the recommendation ready to be submitted by the GNSO [inaudible - 00:46:24] the Board for consideration.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Rafik, you were a bit difficult to hear at times in your intervention but I think I got the gist of it, which would be about providing us with some additional information about some of the work that's underway, but I may be mistaken. So, I apologize.

RAFIK DAMMAK: Sorry, am I more audible now?

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: It's still not very clear, Rafiq.

RAFIK DAMMAK: Okay, I guess. I will ask [inaudible - 00:47:15] in the chat.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Yes, thanks, Rafik. That would be great.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Is there any other comment on this? We can move on to the next question, then. I think we can skip question number six because we addressed that first. For the next question, the NCSG wanted to know what the process for finding a new CEO was and at what stage it is at. Thanks.

TRIPTI SINHA: Thank you. As you probably saw in a recent announcement, we have created a Search Committee. And the Chair of the Search Committee is on my left, Chris Chapman. And I'm going to turn it over to Chris to talk more about the process. Chris, over to you.

CHRIS CHAPMAN: Thank you Chair. Chris Chapman, ICANN Board member, and as Tripti indicated, Chair of the Search Committee. And it is a Search Committee of eight. It's nicely balanced between genders, representing constituencies, geographies, new eyes, fresh eyes, and experienced campaigners, so to speak. So the first step was to appoint the Search Committee. There are three macro blocks, if you like, to the process from here on in.

The next couple of months up to and including Washington late June will be listening sessions which will be many and consistent. And that's where the full Board will be listening to the community. Our Chair has said on a number of occasions that ICANN is on the threshold of another inflection point in its evolution. And that's, when you stop and think about it, a profound thing to say.

We, the Board, think we know what that means and why we've said it, but we want to hold that up to the light and have constructive contestability about what that may mean. And that's what those next four months are all about. We could rush to draw up a job specification for the President CEO role. It was done in 2015. But we are at an inflection point, there are a lot of pressures bearing down, they were outlined by the Chair this morning in our opening remarks.

There are many perspectives on it and there are many perspectives on what needs to be done about it. And there are some emerging perspectives about what ICANN needs to do in terms of reorganizing itself in its decision making, in its timeliness, in its efficiencies, in its communications, and its outreach programs. So we have seamlessly, through the very effective leadership of Sally to date, moved into steady state already. Sally has done a wonderful job, and thank you for taking that role on. There is a positivity around the organization, that's my view. There's momentum within the Board.

So we're going to take time out over the next four months to have a real listening session, that is listening to the community as to its views about where we're at. Because the thing missing in the specification piece for the Board role is the environment. We need a President CEO that is fit for the occasion. And therefore, you need to assess what is that environment that we're seeking to operate in and to activate.

From, roughly, July to October, there will be, through the Search Committee, a search process. And then finally, the full Board will be 100% involved in considering the shortlist and hopefully, logically, making an appointment for this role towards the end of calendar 2023. So, in a nutshell, that's where it's at. The Search Committee is up and running. It's got its full first meeting tonight, many listening sessions happening over the next four months with a view to trying to pull this together by the end of the year.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Chris. I think there were some concerns about what the criteria was but I think you've addressed that in what you said. I saw Farzaneh's hand up.

FARZANEH BADIEI: After 24 years, a quarter of a century, we now have a female Chair and an entering female CEO. It is embarrassing. It took us 24 years to do that? So I think that we should learn a lesson and have a more targeted approach when we want to recruit and select the CEO. And perhaps think about how we can have a better pool of candidates that are female or non-male. People don't like this term, but I use it. And maybe women are not interested in these positions, but we need to find out.

So I insist that the Board and the Search Committee focus primarily on how we can bring a balanced gender diversity to the leadership and to this position, because it is a problem. I have raised this before in 2018. And I'm glad to see that we are making progress, but we need to pay special attention to this. Thank you.

CHRIS CHAPMAN: Thank you for that, and it's noted. And as you said at the outset, we have a woman as Chair and we have a woman as the Acting President CEO, so we'll take that as a comment. Thank you for your contribution.

TOMSLIN SAMME-NLAR: Thanks, Chris. I'm assuming there's no other comment on this, we'll move to the next question. What is ICANN doing to become carbon neutral and sustainable? Why isn't traveling to ICANN meetings by land, when possible, the preferred method of traveling, especially in cases where traveling by land would actually be the faster and more convenient option?

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Tomslin. I think we got Maarten and Wes.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Yes, thank you for that. We are aware, of course, of this world changing carbon neutrality to be an important point. And what we learned during COVID Is that travel is not always necessary. And we want to be conscious about that. So for sure, the carbon footprint from ICANN is considered -- and you may have already seen a block from that in September 2019. We track at least that part of travel from those travelers. ICANN takes the responsibility of ensuring their travel.

So we've been working with the travel provider to ensure that they do the best possible option. At some point, I saw that people thought, well, a train is never an option. But that's not true. Train is not always the practical option. Ideally, we would walk and take sailboats. But for sure, in travel, we look for it. I think ultimately, we should also look beyond that, how ecological footprint is. And we started to talk about that in the Board.

We are aware that within the community people are also very conscious about it. And that's not only in NCSG, but throughout the community. So I think it's the beginning of an awareness that we will act upon as part of a culture and the first measures, at least, if the travel parts that have been paid are already on the track. So with that, I think step by step together, you can count on finding the Board in this discussion with you to find the best way forward.

WES HARDAKER: Thank you for bringing this really important question. It's near and dear to my own heart and our own desires to make the world a better place for all the world, and in particular, my children and all the world's children. I suspect that we all agree that the world needs to recognize the critical importance of not just finding a solution, like traveling by land, but finding many solutions.

We need more than one, and we need them very quickly, if not immediately. I think the pandemic has unfortunately shown simultaneously that virtual meetings work really well but hallway conversations don't. And we made a lot of progress in those three years. There's certainly a significant increase in the percentage of virtual attendance at both ICANN conferences and other conferences, because of the increased support of hybrid meeting technologies that have come about, which has been fantastic.

I myself am going to attend an ICANN-related meeting in two weeks that I would not have attended remotely in the past. And I will be attending it remotely because I don't need to be in the room. Potential climate change mitigations are being discussed much more widely than even within ICANN. It's being discussed in the ICANN community, it's being discussed in Board communities, and it's being discussed in the industry at large. Many studies are being undertaken in multiple organizations, both in annual conferences and in academic environments, and ICANN needs to track not only our own goals, but what the rest of the industry is doing. If the entire industry is going to adapt at once and adapt quickly, we need to track and cooperate with each other.

I was looking at a carbon analysis footprint earlier today that's not even finished. Daniel Migault who's an ICANN member as well as a prominent IETF member, wrote a tool to calculate how much a particular conference emits in a carbon footprint. So he's studying it from multiple vantage points.

More significantly, thank you for your suggestion about preferring ground-based transport. But it's critical that any community member that has an idea brings ideas forward in order to decrease our carbon footprint as rapidly as possible. If you're able to do that virtually and that works, then we should encourage more people to do that. And we should encourage more people to come up with ideas and bring them forward. So thank you for doing that. And I hope to hear from many more people about ideas that we can work on going forward. Thanks.

MATTHEW SHEARS: Thanks, Wes. Thanks, everybody. I'm afraid we're going to have to wrap it up here. I know we have two questions to go but we've run out of time and we can come back to you on those two questions. I'd like to, again, say how very nice it is to see you all here in Cancun. Thank you for the excellent questions and thank you for an excellent session. We can close this session. Thank you.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**