
ICANN77 | PF – GDS: New gTLD Program Next Round Implementation Status Recap and Q&A
Monday, June 12 2023 – 15:30 to 17:00 DCA

SAMANTHA MANCIA: Hello and welcome to the New gTLD Program: Next Round session. My name is Samantha Mancia, and I am the remote participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior. Interpretation for this session will include French and Spanish. Click on the interpretation icon in Zoom and select the language you will listen to during the session. Questions will be taken at the end of this session during the Q&A portion of the call.

With that, I will hand the floor over to SVP of Global Domains and Strategy, Theresa Swinehart.

THERESA SWINEHART: Thank you, and welcome, everybody. We appreciate that it's an exception to do this kind of session at a policy forum like this, and we really, really appreciate the opportunity and the time that's been allocated. We've made so much progress on the work relating to the SubPro and the recommendations, both from an organizational side, but importantly from the community side and the work that's been underway leading into this meeting, and of course the Board. So we thought it would be very useful to share with you where we are with the ICANN 77 deliverables, of which you're such a large part of, an overview of the work that's occurred since ICANN 76, some of the timelines and next steps.

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So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Karen, who's lead on the program, and look forward to a very good discussion. And again, thank you for the time and the opportunity to have a good conversation here.

KAREN LENTZ:

Thank you very much, Teresa. I'm Karen Lentz. I'm Vice President of Policy Research and Stakeholder Programs for ICANN. For those who are coming into the room, there are plenty of seats here at the table still available, so you're welcome to join us.

So as far as today's agenda, we welcome you to ICANN 77. We're going to be talking about what we collectively expect to accomplish during this meeting. This is really motivated by a Board resolution in the last ICANN meeting in March, which asked for a number of things to be delivered in service of creating an overall implementation plan and schedule for the next round of the New gTLD Program and how the pieces need to come together to be able to achieve that. And so we'll be going through that work today.

Before we get into this, for anyone who may be new to the topic, when we talk about the New gTLD Program, this is the part of ICANN's work that relates to the allocation of names at the top level of the Internet's domain name system. And so the New gTLD Program allows for people to propose new top-level domains and apply to operate them. And so what we're talking about here is the procedures around a future round of that application process.

So I'm going to introduce the speakers here for this session. They're going to have a number of updates from a variety of these areas. Can

we go to the next slide please? So, going through the list here, Bob Ochieng will talk about the timeline and next steps overall of the program and work overall. Lars Hoffman will describe the work on the Applicant Guidebook for future rounds in coordination with the implementation review team. Chris Bare will talk about the operational streams of work having to do with systems, tools, and other aspects of operations. Kristy Buckley will talk about the work on the Applicant Support Program, which was a key part of the recommendations that the community has made. Francisco Arias will talk about the work on the Registry Service Provider Pre-Evaluation Program, another set of recommendations that's intended to help streamline some of the technical evaluation areas. Sally Newell-Cohen will describe the work in progress around communications planning, and Sebastien Ducos, Chair of the GNSO Council, will talk about the incredible amount of work that the GNSO Council has been putting in to create some of these building blocks that go into this overall plan.

Can we go to the next slide please? And the next one. So when we talk about the ICANN 77 deliverables, this is really what the Board is asking of all of us (the Org, the Board, and the community) to be able to create an overall implementation plan to follow by that we would be able to share by the first of August of this year. And so the things that you see on this screen are really interim deliverables or pieces that we need to be able to create that overall implementation and plan and schedule that has all of the pieces in it.

So quickly just to summarize these, the Board asked for an implementation status report on the next round in advance of every ICANN meeting going forward. So we published that. That is in the form

of the policy research and stakeholder programs briefing that my team has created. Then we had a deliverable for the IRT methodology work plan and timeline (Lars will go into that in a moment) and then an overview of the work necessary to complete program development. Chris will talk about that aspect. Then, at this meeting already, we've had work in progress on all of the things in the second category there with Board and community deliverables. So the Board and GNSO Council have spent quite a bit of time already going through some of the pending policy recommendations and how to get to a way forward on that, whether it's clarifications or working out different process solutions. And then there are some efforts already underway relating to internationalized domain names and also a group that's looking at a possible framework for closed generic applications. Those groups have also already been meeting at this at ICANN 77 and have some deliverables to show their essential expected work plan and timeline to go forward.

Next slide please. And the next. So this slide illustrates the parallel way that we think about some of this work. So on the top, you see the policy-related activities. And in the second row, you see the program development activities. "Program development" is an umbrella term that we use to describe the internal operational process development, the infrastructure, and the operations work that needs to be in place to be able to open a new round. And so as we've been working on spinning up the IRT, helping support the GNSO and their discussions on the policy issues, at the same time, the Org has been working on a working model that would be the basis of the estimates on the program development timeline. And you can think of program development as

what needs to happen after the Applicant Guidebook is done. Even though a lot of it happens in parallel, there are some things that can only happen once you have certainty on things. And so this is all going to come together in the plan that we're developing to be shared on August 1st, or at least by August 1st at the latest.

So we'll go into now some of these areas in more detail. So I'll hand it to Lars to start off with policy implementation. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMAN:

Thank you, Karen. Welcome, everyone. Hello, my name is Lars Hoffman. I'm, as Karen said, working with the IRT to develop the Applicant Guidebook. And I'm certainly not doing this alone. I've got a number of my team here in the room who are supporting that effort very much.

Sam, if you can go forward two slides, please. Thank you. This is the first slide. This is I suppose the very bare minimum of what we've done, administrative stuff for the IRT. I think my colleague Andrew will paste a link to the wiki on the web, into the Zoom room as well. And the mailing list is set up, the workspace created, and the call for volunteers following the Board's resolution in Cancun, as Karen said, has gone out in time. And we had, I think, three meetings with the IRT since.

If I can see the next slide, please. We did a slightly different model for the IRT. This was discussed, I think, in Cancun with the GNSO Council. The Board had also asked for a methodology to be included in the work plan to kind of try to streamline the work processes. So we borrowed the GNSO's 2.0 PDP improvement template and created kind of an open and representative model. There was a couple of questions around that

in the beginning, but I think what's really important is that, in principle, all the members of the IRT have exactly the same rights, everybody can speak up, everybody can post to the list, and everybody's opinion is valued. It is just that we hope that the representatives that have been nominated by the SOs and Acs, or the stakeholder groups and constituencies, perform, if you want, a two-way service. So they speak, obviously, if they want, with their personal hat, but also, on occasion, where it's appropriate, represent the views of the organizations that have selected them.

And there's one other aspect that comes in when there's really a concern in the IRT that, in a proposal made for Applicant Guidebook language by ICANN Org, that language may not align with the wording or the intent of the recommendations, and there is no alignment found between Org or even within the IRT. Then per procedures it behooves the GNSO Council liaison to report back the view of the IRT to the Council to help overcome the stalemate, if you want, and there the council liaison is encouraged to pay attention specifically also to what the representatives say, because obviously they represent all of the SOs and ACs. We had a couple of SOs and ACs that selected or elected not to send any representatives, that's obviously their prerogative, but I think we have a good number of them and you can find them on the website as well.

I also believe that we have (it's not on the slide), the council liaisons nominated. I see Anne over there. And I believe you share your position with Susan, is that right? I'm not sure whether Susan is in the room, Susan Payne. In any case, two liaisons. It's a big project, so we're looking forward to working together for sure.

If I can see the next slide please. Thank you. For those of you who may not be intimately familiar with an IRT, it is not a working group. There's no chair from the community. It is led by ICANN Org. So if you dial in, you usually will have to do with my drabby voice, I'm afraid. And there's also no voting as such. It's really something where we exchange views, try to land on a combined joint landing spot. And to kind of avoid situations where conversations drag on for too long (not that that ever happens with an ICANN, obviously), we have kind of a methodology here that proposes kind of a first reading, which essentially means that ICANN all proposes some draft language to the IRT. Then feedback is gathered and input is sought. Once that has taken place, that could be just one meeting. It could also run across multiple meetings and multiple weeks. Then ICANN will go away and update the language based on the feedback received, always bearing in mind that the language needs to be aligned with the intent and the wording of the recommendations. And then is what we call a second reading, where we really just share with the IRT the updated language. If there's any red flags, maybe a misunderstanding, or really something has gone wrong, that obviously would be corrected, but we wouldn't necessarily enter in another round of in-depth discussions.

And also, for those of you who were around during the last round, I believe the Applicant Guidebook went through numerous rounds of public comments when it was eventually published for the first time. And to be more efficient in public comment takes time, right? It's a couple of months at least. So to also minimize the amount of public comments that are required once the Applicant Guidebook is completed, we really want to work with the IRT to identify reasonable

chunks, let's say, of the Applicant Guidebook. Once they have been approved, or the IRT has given its input and its belief that the language does align with the intent of the recommendations, we put those chunks out for public comment so that once we have a complete Applicant Guidebook, essentially everything has already been at least once out for public comment. And then obviously the full guidebook will go out for public comment again.

And after this, I have one more slide and probably what people are most interested in. Sam, one more, please. Is it Sam's screen, actually? Thank you. So at the moment we have 98 recommendations from the final report that the ICANN Board has approved. So they are subject to implementation. I don't think I overstep my authority when saying that the Board had a very productive workshop and very constructive discussions with the GNSO Council about the 38 pending recommendations. And we think that (well, I think; let's put it this way; I don't want to put anyone else on there) probably many of those will be resolved relatively soon. So, we probably will have the full set of recommendations sooner rather than later to implement.

At the moment, we have an overall timeline of 15 to 24 months. There's very few things more difficult to predict than the future. But this is the kind of working timeline that we've given ourselves. Some of us in the IRT believe we could do it much faster. Others believe it takes maybe a lot longer. So if nobody's happy, maybe that's a good compromise. The timeline obviously is also impacted by the dependencies below. Those of you familiar with the Board resolution from Cancun know that the Board has asked the Council to provide timelines around some of these dependencies, notably the work on closed generics, and the IDN EPDP

as well. In addition to that, there's a guidance process around applicant support that is ongoing as well that will feed into the implementation work. And then finally, the NCAP2 study is a dependency for one of the recommendations that the Board has marked as pending. And then there's also other implementation or recommendations from other work streams that will feed into the Applicant Guidebook. Those have all been approved, so we're not really waiting for anything. We just need to make sure that those are included in the Applicant Guidebook. And so the full guidebook can only obviously be completed once those dependencies have been successfully brought to an end and the Board has approved the recommendations that may come out of these.

I spoke to the methodology, the first and the second reading on the previous slide, so I'm sure you don't want to hear about that again. We have published a work plan that is on the wiki page for the IRT. You'll see there also the topics that we're planning to bring to the IRT over the next few weeks up until ICANN 78. I believe the first one after ICANN 77 is the predictability framework. work. And forgive me, I don't have the others off top of my head, but they are in the document. We've mapped that out. And I think what we've also said as a final point of order here with the IRT is (I joked a little bit about predicting the future), as the work progresses, we really want to reassess the timeline, right? I think we don't want to be in a position where all of a sudden we're done after 12 months and nobody knows about that. On the other hand, we also don't want to drag out further than this and people not being aware that for whatever reason there's delays. So the work plan is a working-slash-living document, and depending on the progress that is being

made, we'll update both the timelines as well as the sequencing of topics that we'll discuss with the IRT accordingly. me.

And with that, I think I've taken too much time already, and I'll pass it on to Chris. Thank you.

CHRIS BARE:

Thank you, Lars. My name is Chris Bare, and I'm going to talk to you about the program development. Now, Karen talked earlier about the fact that program development is actually made up of three workstreams. If you recall in the ODA, we talked about four different workstreams; workstreams one through four. Number one is what Lars just went over, policy implementation, and that's the one that has a lot of interaction with the community through the IRT. These next three, program design, infrastructure development, and operationalization, all have a heavy internal focus as far as the Org is concerned, so we're putting them together and calling them program development. The intent is to simplify to having two different terms eventually.

With that, can we go to the next slide? So one of the major things we talked about is we're developing a methodology for us to get to a point where we've operationalized the work that needs to happen. So starting with the policy implementation that Lars is working on, we expect to get the requirements that we're going to be building into our processes from that stage of work. The next three stages are the program design, which is really focused on building out the processes, determining which functions within ICANN are required to do certain tasks and trying to figure out the time frame it's going to take and the like and building out those processes to do that.

Once that's done, we should have all of the business requirements from that that get fed over into infrastructure development. And infrastructure development is really the makeup of the systems and the tools that we'll be needing to actually deliver those processes. So this would be any of the IT systems, which is a big part of this, as well as anything we decide needs to be done manually. And there is an intention to have a lot of these processes still done manually, particularly when we have ones that are either exceedingly complex (and hopefully we don't have too many of those) or where there aren't that many to do and putting it into a system may not make sense in the sense of how much time and effort it would take.

From that, once the systems are developed, then we would move into the operationalization phase. And the primary thing here is to build the ability to deliver those services. So this would be in the case where we need to bring in vendors. Like, last round we had well over 20 vendors that did the evaluations and several other aspects of the program. We will be doing RFPs, requests for proposals, and going out and identifying vendors that can actually do that work for us. During that time we'll also be actually proceduralizing the processes and the tools that we talked about and then hiring whatever staff is needed to operate the program at that point. We will also be trained, and then we'll be doing any final testing that needs to occur to ensure that the program can actually operate.

On the slide there's some talk about steps and deliverables. I won't go over the details. You can read that.

But can we go to the next slide? So talking a little bit about what we've done in the last few months, I'll go by the different work streams. So program design. We've worked on the actual processes that we have, we've developed that methodology I just talked about, and we've put together an inventory of the processes that we're aware of to date. Right now we're well over 60 processes that we have, as we work through that we'll try to refine that down and we might identify other ones along the way. We've also gone and mapped those to different projects that we're intending to have kick off that actually will group some of these processes into what would make sense from a service architecture point of view, and started to work on actually creating the documentation that will help support Lars' team in the process documents that will go into the AGB, as well as the ones we will use to develop the processes ourselves for IT.

For Workstream 3, this is the one that has the heavy IT component in it, and since the ODA, the engineering and IT department, has spent a lot of effort in trying to rethink the approach on what they put into the ODA ... And for those of you who are aware, in December or January, they ran an RFP, and we're looking to see what other platforms might be available (and other vendors) and trying to find and assess a vendor that would work well with ICANN in the way we operate. One thing to say with that is that they have been working on a proof of concept and we've tested out some preliminary functionality. The results so far of that are positive and we hope that the results of that will be incorporated into the August 1 implementation plan deliverable. So that should hopefully give us some better numbers to work with when we get to that point.

And one thing you'll note on here is Workstream 4, which is the operationalization, doesn't really have a lot of tasks associated with it yet. And when you think about that, most of the operationalization is about taking those processes, taking those systems and tools, and putting them together into the ability to deliver those services. So a lot of that is going to be downstream once we've completed aspects of the other two workstreams. We will be using a lot of what we learned in the 2012 round in our estimates for the August timeframe, but those numbers are expected to become refined over time as we learn more about what the actual workload is going to be to actually implement the actual processes themselves.

All right. With that, I will hand it over to Kristy.

KRISTY BUCKLEY:

Thanks, Chris, and hello, everyone. This next section will focus on the Applicant Support Program, the Registry Service Provider Pre-Evaluation and Communications Planning. Next slide. So we have a few updates to share on the Applicant Support Program. First, ICANN recently announced an Expression of Interest Survey, which we launched to raise awareness that pro bono service providers are needed to support diverse applicants in the next round. The survey is also intended to provide insights about what geographies, service areas, and languages that they could support, and for how many applicants they could support. Once we analyze the survey results, we can use that to inform communications, outreach, and engagement in future recruitment efforts. The survey is available on the ICANN announcements page and in the six UN languages. It'll also be sent via

direct email to the 2012 pro bono service providers and also registry service providers.

The second update is that ICANN staff have been working collaboratively as needed with the GNSO guidance process or the GGP as it's known, which is for applicant support. We've been helping to inform their discussions as appropriate. As you might recall, the GGP was tasked with articulating measures of success for applicant support, what metrics to use to measure success, and how resources should be allocated in the scenario that the number of qualified supported applicants exceeds the available resources. The GNSO guidance process is still underway, with an estimated final report delivered at the end of this year. For those interested, the GGP is holding a session tomorrow, Tuesday at 3.30pm, and it is open to observers, I believe.

Third, ICANN.Org is beginning to conduct vendor interviews for entities that might be able to help develop a framework to assess applicants' financial need and public interest benefit for the Applicant Support Program. The intent is to utilize the Global Public Interest Framework in that work, and the selected vendor would also help to refine the draft Applicant Support Handbook in advance of it being shared with the Implementation Review Team.

And lastly, regarding a timeline for the Applicant Support Program, as we noted the GGP is still underway, and ICANN Org expects to have a timeline ready to share by August of this year.

And with that, I'll turn it over to my colleague Francisco. Thanks.

FRANCISCO ARIAS:

Thank you, Kristy. So I'm going to talk about the Registry Service Provider Pre-Evaluation Program. This is a new element of this round of new TLDs. This is intended to be an improvement over what was done last time.

Very briefly, last round we had about 1,900 applications. Of those, 1,200 gTLDs proceed to delegation. And of those, they are using about 40, a little bit less than 40, with registry service providers. Those are the companies that are providing the services behind the TLD; for example, DNS, DNSSEC, EPP, WHOIS, RDAP, et cetera. So the way things were structured last time, the 1,900 applications were evaluated individually and that resulted, for example, in the technical evaluation and the registry evaluation, 1,900 times. But that was not something that could be improved and that's the intention to be done with this program. So instead of, for example, doing those 1,900 technical evaluations or registry evaluations, we will do only, assuming we have the same number of RSPs as last time, 40. So that will be a big improvement in terms of how the evaluation goes, hopefully it will result in some savings on time and effort.

But this also requires that the program is sort of a mini-program that has to run before the actual gTLD application window starts in the operational design assessment. We noted that the evaluation of these RSP applicants has to be done, completed, six months before the opening of the utility application window, so that the applicants can choose, if they wish to do so, one of the pre-evaluated providers.

So with that in mind, as you can see here, with this draft timeline that we have prepared, we noted that we needed to work already on this in order to be able to be ready for the utility application window.

So with that in mind, we have already been working, my team has been working, on requirements, for example, for the portal, the criteria for pre-evaluating the RSPs, so they are already on the way. And that's it for the registry service provider evaluation. I'm going to pass the microphone now to Sally.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN:

Thanks Francisco, and hello everyone. I'm Sally Newell Cohen, and I am heading up the communications planning and implementation for the next round.

So in the working group's final report, it included several recommendations specific to communications. Recommendation 13.2 focused on the need for an effective communication strategy and plan to support the goals of the program. The working group also recommended that the communications plan be developed with timeliness, broad outreach, and accessibility as key priorities. The working group also believed that for the next round, it needed that the communications period should begin at least six months prior to the beginning of application submission period, and it needed to be proportionate with the time needed to create awareness and education related to applicant support, and that would be to allow interested parties to engage also in the registry service provider pre-evaluation process. It's also important to make applicants aware of universal acceptance challenges in ASCII and IDM TLDs.

And in terms of reach, the report specifically addresses the importance of creating early awareness to as many potential applicants as possible around the world, which is broad.

Although the recommendation is to implement the communications plan no less than six months prior to the launch, we believe there's an opportunity to start now, and I know many of you do as well. So we've designed a communications plan that's going to be conducted in two phases. This will allow us to create awareness with specific focus on targeted developing countries and audiences for whom digital inclusivity is critical. Universal acceptance and the availability of IDNs will be of importance to these audiences and a potential gateway to interest in applying for a TLD. And this first phase will set us up for phase two.

So in phase one is a 12- to 15-month campaign. It's going to be executed in three month long mini campaigns that will target several countries in Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin and South America, and the Middle East. We're gonna be targeting audiences (this isn't the complete list, but to give you a sense) of technology developers, decision makers in governments and ministries, small, mid-sized, and large businesses, academia, civil society, and more. There will be three main primary objectives to this first phase of the campaign, and it will be to explain the importance of UA for building a more inclusive internet, highlighting the availability of IDNs, and also generating awareness of the opportunities that gTLDs present. The campaign will have a global element as well, but the emphasis is going to be on developing areas. We're taking a multi-channel approach, as you can imagine, to this, leveraging public relations, media relations, social media, local events, and targeted

engagements that will be collaborating with the global stakeholder engagement team. This first phase actually launched in March in support of UA Day. And the first mini campaign is going to be launched within the next month.

We can go to the next slide, please. Phase two of the communications plan will begin 18 months before the application round opens. This also will be an 18-month campaign that specifically focuses on generating awareness about the next round, why one would apply, to set expectations about the application process. It will highlight the Applicant Support Program and the RSP pre-evaluation process, which we will have already introduced in Phase 1 when those components and those programs and the details of them are available. Phase 2 will be a much more global effort, but it will be also customized for unique audiences. And in this phase, again, we're going to leverage that multi-channel approach.

Both phases are going to be a combined effort with global communications, GSE, and GE, but we're also planning to make materials available for the community; so narratives, messaging, engaging, social media collateral, other materials that can be used by the community for their outreach and engagement as well.

And those are really the high-level points to help you get a sense of where we're headed with the communications plan. It will evolve and it will continue to expand, but this is the sense of how we're planning it.

So with that, I'm going to turn it to Sebastien Ducos.

SEBASTIEN DUCOS:

Hello, everybody. My name is Sebastien Ducos and I am the GNSO Chair and I will take the last leg of this presentation to discuss the work that the GNSO has been doing since ICANN Cancun 76.

Next slide, please. Just for memory, the ICANN Board in Cancun tasked the GNSO with resolving or finding paths to resolutions on three pending problems, three pending issues, which will need to be completed and then fitted in the work of the IRT, and in provision of the grant plan that we will have on 1 August, tasked us, the GNSO, to basically plot timelines for that resolution and turn it on then to Org, who will put that in their master plan.

So first amongst these items to resolve were the 38 pending recommendations, these are amongst a lot of the SubPro recommendations that were delivered two years ago, a year-and-a-half ago, that were voted on in Cancun. There was a lot of 38 recommendations that could not be voted on at that time, and so we spent since then all our efforts, or lots of effort, in a small team working between the GNSO Council and the Board, and I want to note particularly the participation of Becky Burr and Avri Doria, who helped us tremendously through this work to understand exactly where the issues were in the eyes of the Board and how we could work together to resolve them.

So the progress so far is that this small team went through the 38 recommendations and triaged them into, or bucket them (we use the word “triage”) into buckets of understanding where the Board issues were and suggesting path to resolutions. We'll see that in detail afterwards, but some of those recommendations in our view were

simply needing clarification. Some were tasks that were actually IRT tasks rather than pure policy, and so on and so forth. We had an external Board council on the 4th of May where we as council agreed on how we had sorted those 38 recommendations. Again, when we say “triage” we identify the path, implicitly the path to resolution. It doesn't mean that we've resolved all of those, but it means that some of those, again, we are going to send to IRT. Some of them we know that there will be wordsmithing to provide some clarification, and so on and so forth.

And so on the 4th of May, we agreed to that and passed that information on to the Board. Again, I want to make it absolutely clear that in the interest of time, in the interest of clarity, all these stages are necessary in the ICANN process. We need to go from the GNSO to the Board and back and forth. But that was also done with multiple levels and channels of communication with the Board to make sure that we were not sending things that were unacceptable and so on and so forth.

We then shared all that information on the 22nd, and the Board effectively has been working on our response since, and particularly up till this weekend, during their retreat (sorry, [inaudible] is escaping me), through the work that they've been doing ahead of this week.

We as GNSO Council met yesterday, Sunday (it seems like already a week ago) to go through those comments, and again, in the presence of Becky Burr and Avri Doria, to make sure, once again, the answers that they were about to provide were understood correctly and no misunderstanding there. And so we were, as late as yesterday, able to update our plan on those, all ahead of our standard council meeting on

Wednesday, at which point we will put a stamp on it and send it officially to the Board ahead of their 15 June deadline.

I'm very bad at reading slides as I speak, so you will figure out most of it, but I think the next slide has some more details there. So again, we want to work on those timelines for the 38 recommendations, but as I said in the beginning, there was two other tasks that were given to us. There's this crucial task of identifying the IDN EPDP timelines. The IDN EPDP, which has already been going on for a while, has a Phase 1 report that has been published that is currently under public comment, I believe, until early next week, the 19th. I see from Dennis a nod, so I shouldn't be too far from the truth. The IDN EPDP, knowing the timelines that were ahead of it, was tasked with re-evaluating all the work remaining to identify in its work everything that was vital for the next round, and by extension, reviewing their timelines in order for us to go and feed that into the system.

The analysis that came out of it was that essentially all of it was important and vital for the next round. And so the cause that was set by the IRT up until now is at this stage confirmed and that is the information that we will pass on. So the IRT is due to deliver its final report, Phase 2 final report, in November 2025.

Now as managers of the PDP, we are looking also with the EPDP in ways to speed this process. This is a tricky subject in the sense that the competence level required to be efficient and to be operational on this subject is actually not one that we find. It's a mix of language of technicality, et cetera, there's only a limited number of people in this community. We can't throw more brains and bodies at it. There's a

limited number of experts that are going to be able to work on this. The other way this work can go faster is to take the opportunity, for example, like this week, of us being all in a room and being able to work together. So as of already this ICANN, the group has taken upon itself to work harder, longer. They have actually a working session every day of this week in order to progress fast. They have requested us to have some face-to-face interaction outside of ICANN weeks, and we are in the process of securing that for them, particularly this year, for the end of the year. In November, December, there will be a session (at this stage, it's not fully confirmed) in Asia, in Kuala Lumpur, in Singapore. Why? Because that theme, that thematic, is one that is particularly well followed, particularly richly, by the community in Asia around Asian IDNs.

So to us and hopefully to the rest of the community too, why is this particular one a key one? Because, one, we've all decided that IDNs were absolutely a component of the next round. It's still high focus for this whole community. And, two, because as we see it now, this is the item that will take us the longest. Of all the things that we need to do, this is the one that was going to take us the [longest]. In planning theory we're talking about critical paths, this is the item that forms it. So any compression of time, any reduction on this, is going to have an impact on the landing spot in the end.

So again, right now we're working with what we have. We are at a crucial time of this particular project, as I explained, in the middle of public comment of Phase 1. As you know, after these public comments are closed, there's a work to re-ingest the comments and finalize the first report, and I think that the amount of time that is spent on that, as much

as Phase 2 and running that in parallel, will indicate if there is possibilities of removing the target [inaudible].

Next slide. So the other item that's been identified by the Board is the one of closed generics. This is one that everybody should be familiar with, but here's just a very brief history. In the previous round, there was no such thing as a closed generic. A number of applications location came out of the initial phase, using generic names, obviously with a targeted use that was going to be closed. And the GAC very early on offered advice from ICANN Beijing, if I remember well what the final advice was, saying essentially that we can do this or asking for community input and rework. And we spent the last 10 years trying to figure out how to crack that particular nut. that. There were some subsections of it referring, for example, to the medical domain or banking or insurance or that. These domains where we found working solutions, but in general the closed generic is a problem that we haven't been able to resolve. It's a problem that was tackled during the PDP and was found not to find a solution back then either.

Last year the Board came back to the GNSO Council and suggested that we go and find a new framework to work side by side with the GAC and offer solutions. The way this panned out is the closed generic is not an EPDP at this stage. It was a discussion that's been had with some representative of the GNSO, of the GAC and of ALAC in a format that hadn't been used before, with people not representing entities but themselves; so people representing their goodwill. There was no such thing as real experts in closed generics, because again, this was a concept that was thrown at us as was. But it was developing the ideas and the concept and et cetera. And for those who have followed this,

the group in question had essentially decided and agreed to operate behind closed doors in order to let everybody basically voice what it needed to voice and express freely.

This has now come to pretty much an end. We've received last week a framework from this group that identifies not so much what would be an acceptable closed generic, but what would formulate the ideas around it? And I'm trying to be careful about the words I use, because they were very careful about the way they presented it. But essentially, a closed generic would be a TLD operated in a closed manner, even though it uses a generic term that would be acceptable if it complies with the public interest, a term to be quoted because it's not completely defined. And so even though the framework was given to us as a draft, there is a comment period going on that will close mid-July. And I'm looking around the room for if somebody can confirm that; the 15th of July I have in my head. And the group will finalize that.

We as the GNSO have already identified that there is a number of things here that will require policy development. Without getting into the details, pre-empting, we haven't even started working on any sort of draft charter, defining what is an acceptable closed generic. Where the border is is going to be part of that work; how do we evaluate, what sort of questions, how do we score those questions and so on. All that, without getting into details, should be policy work in the form of the EPDP (that's the title of the slide) that will start imminently. Again, it can't start before the framework is finalized. We will try to put all our ducks in a row to make sure they can start as soon as that is done. But we have committed to the GAC and ALAC to include them in the charter, to include them in the PDP, to include them in all that work.

At this stage, we've just identified (we had to do that work before seeing the framework work, so there's a bit of guesswork here) 96 weeks of work. I still am completely incapable of translating that into months and years. You'll figure it out. You'll do the math. But essentially that is not on the critical path, if the IDNs are. This is not, meaning that this will fit well with it. I assume that we'll be able to do this in less than 96 weeks, there's a number of things that we can do to compress time on. There's a few moving parts that we can compress time on. But at this stage, again, because it's not critical as is IDN, because we're waiting for a final framework and et cetera, we'll fine-tune that as we go.

I believe that's the last slide and I haven't looked at time, so my colleagues will stop me if I'm speaking way too much. Is this the last slide?

BOB OCHIENG:

Great. Thank you, Sebastien. My name is Bob Ochieng, and I now will speak to you about the timelines. And I think this has been building up from the entire presentation. I think what has been demonstrated is work within the Org and work within the community. And essentially this has to be concluded for us to actually open the next round.

So if I get the next slide, we just try to estimate, first of all, demonstrating the key milestones in two parts: what is happening at policy implementation site, like the resident within the community, so that is essentially the IRT work driven by the Org, but oversighted by the IRT, including what Jeff has just mentioned as pending work, pending recommendations yet to be completed, and trying to map that into an

estimated timeline to consolidate that into the final AGB that essentially determines when the next round can be opened.

So two things that I wanted to underscore. First of all is that this work is happening in parallel. So, in the policy implementation front, assuming after the Board resolves on the pending recommendations, there will be an ASP program, an application guidebook, public comment at some point, then the IRT concludes, and at the same time, on the program development front, essentially a lot of system development work will be going on in parallel; now systems related to supporting the ASP and the RSP the rest of the systems to run the program. But this can only be finalized after the final AGB is approved. That is when you can finalize the entire systems, roll that out, bring in staff and train, and eventually open the next round.

So currently, with the information that we have, the Org is estimating that it will take two years, or at least two years, on the IRT front, and one more year to finalize the rest of the work that has to be done after the draft AGB is finalized. So you can look at it at 2 plus 1. Now, if for the IRT phase, or if the policy implementation phase, if there is any chance that that phase can be shortened, then it is possible to do it in less time. So we are projecting 2 plus 1, and the first two years is focused on the amount of work that will be necessary to complete the IRT work. Of course, those estimates are subject to receipt on input on timing plans to resolve all open issues relating to pending recommendations, as has been highlighted, including IDN EPDPs and close generics, and essentially, finally, the completion of the AGB. Once that is done, and any delay in that process, potentially can cascade to delays across the other work streams.

So this is what we have at the moment. And if there's any way that this can be fast-tracked within the community as well, then they all will cascade the same in shortening the entire timeline. So this is the timeline that we are projecting at the moment.

And with that, I want to transition it to a Q&A session. So before we start the Q&A, just to point out that we do have two mics on both sides. So if you are not next to one, please take note that you can either use on the other side or this side. And if you are online, you can put your question on the chat and it will be read out and answered. So with that, I'll open it up to questions. You can raise your hand in the Zoom room or within the room. And if you're next to a mic, you can line up next to one. Thank you very much. So, who wants to go first?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

I think Jeff had his hand up since five minutes past three.

JEFF NEUMAN:

It seems that way. That's when Seb started talking. Just kidding. Actually, no. Am I kidding? So starting from that last point where you said 2 plus 1, 3 years, and that's if everything goes perfect, right? So let's do the math there. Mid-2026 if everything goes perfect. We have to do better, guys. Come on. I'm looking at a lot of this stuff and I could be happy from an operational standpoint to go through each and every one of these timelines and give my input on it, but, you know, putting in a timeline, for example, procurement to do an RFP for a vendor and to negotiate it with legal, it was going to take three quarters of a year. That is a little excessive, right? RSP pre-evaluation program? We

basically have a lot of that process, or should have, in place. It's got to scale a little bit. But I can tell you from experience that when we do an assignment to a new registry, sometimes you have to do those evaluations again, and that doesn't take that long, thankfully. It doesn't even cost what we're talking about costing. So I don't even know where to start. I appreciate all the work you've done on all of this, but it almost seems like we're settling – sorry, one more point. You're not hiring any vendors until after an AGB (sorry, panelists or vendors) before an AGB is finalized (or certain vendors), but yet you're projecting out timelines that they would be responsible for after they're hired. Wouldn't it make sense to hire a bunch of vendors initially that will be building the systems, that can be part of it as opposed to bringing them in after everything is done? There's a lot here. Granted, I work for myself now, which is great, and my boss is a jerk, but the point is that when I work for a lot of companies, if I were to tell them that there's a program they wanted to implement, but it was going to take three years to implement, I mean, seriously, would any of us that work for companies still have a job?

So I appreciate the work that's been done, and of course we can't see the details, so there's no way we can really evaluate these. I'd love more of the detail, if you can make that public. But we really have to find better ways to make this quicker. To have, for example (and I'll end it here, sorry) the pre-evaluation program final, the guidebook final, but then take another year-and-a-half before we can go through all those processes? It all seems quite excessive. And I don't know if you're just trying to be conservative because you don't want to let people down, but the problem is that if you have such conservative timelines, that's

what people will work to. And that's when we slip, and that's when we're talking about 2027. And I've got to tell you, the last round was 2012. So I'll leave it there. Thanks.

BOB OCHIENG:

Thank you very much, Jeff.

I'm sure Teresa, you want to make a comment to Jeff?

THERESA SWINEHART:

Jeff, just thanks for your comments. I think as would be in any organization, in any operations, we're following, obviously, our internal processes and procedures, and making sure that we're handling things in the most appropriate way for an organization that is serving the public interest. As you know, there's a lot of different moving parts going on, including the community work that's anticipated to be completed. So I think as long as all of us look at all the timelines and look at how we can shorten them in different kinds of ways, then we can all work together in order to do that. But obviously with the estimates that we're looking at with regards to operations, we're also ensuring that we're checking all the boxes and handling everything according to procedures. So thanks for your input.

BOB OCHIENG:

Karen, do you want to add anything on that?

KAREN LENTZ:

Sure. This is something that we're spending a lot of time on as part of trying to create a plan that's stable, starting in August, that everyone can work to. We've never looked at the two pieces of it. We've never tried to do something like this program with an IRT. And so, at large, this is kind of innovating, I think, as far as looking for ways to establish methodologies that help. But this is also not something that we've done before. So that's part of what we're trying to anticipate with the guidebook piece.

The other piece, as far as what needs to happen after that, is kind of what the Board asked us to look at in their Cancun resolution, which was, what are all the things that need to happen for the program to be ready, assuming all of that policy implementation work is done? And that's what been going away and looking at and coming up with. We think it's essentially a year. And so that green box on the timeline slide that Bob was talking to is the one that moves, where we have the ability to compress or accelerate different pieces in the two years, the one, the green box can move. But this is also work that we've been doing without all of the information. For example, on some of the recommendations, we don't know how they'll come out as far as what we're building. So we're taking that into account as well. Thank you.

BOB OCHIENG:

Thank you, Karen.

Sebastien?

SEBASTIEN DUCOS:

Sebastien Ducos for the record, without trying to sound like a broken record. So first of all, thank you, Karen, for noting indeed that this is as we see it today, and there will be some sliding, hopefully in the right direction, between now and August. Personally, yeah, I don't love the idea either, waiting another three years, but we need to be real.

What I just want everybody to also keep on reminding themselves is that this is no longer a goalpost that we're setting amongst ourselves and just for ourselves. What we're trying to achieve here is to have a launch date that we can announce to the rest of the world. There is a significant amount of work to be done to then go and socialize that, go and build a market, go and build client lists, etc., etc., etc., and it will be very important for them to have a deadline that doesn't move.

So we can't be too conservative. We can't wait forever. I agree with you, Jeff, that all that seems so far from the light. The previous round makes me want to cry. But at the same time, it would be absolutely catastrophic to set ourselves a goal that we can't achieve and having at the last moment to cancel something or delay it by six months vis-à-vis the market. Thanks.

BOB OCHIENG:

Thank you very much, Sebastien.

Any further questions from the room?

Then I'll move on—yeah, sure. Please introduce yourself and for the record.

MICHAEL FLEMMING: Thank you. I'm Michael Fleming. First of all, I want to say thank you for presenting all this information. I know it's not easy putting all this together, so thank you. I put three questions into the Q&A. I just wanted to ask if those were received, and I'm not going to ask all three, but I did want to ask Sebastien one question. You mentioned that this closed generic EPDP would not be on a critical path. Can you clarify that? Meaning that it would not be necessary to do that for another round to happen?

SEBASTIEN DUCOS: No, no, certainly not. What I said is that it will happen. The timelines that we see on it today will happen before the end of IDNs. So if the IDN is that factor that is limiting how early we can do it, the closed generics at this stage of our analysis won't be. And that's what the critical path is. There is another discussion, indeed, of saying, do we need them and do we need to... At this point, I'd like not to have that conversation, because from what I see, we have time to deal with it and still fit it in the next round.

MICHAEL FLEMMING: Thank you. And is it possible to get written answers to the other questions in the chat? Thank you.

BOB OCHIENG: Sure. So we'll come to the questions in the chat, and just a reminder that please, if you're putting questions online, put them in the Q&A pod. It's much easier for us to synthesize them from the rest of the chat.

So I see a question right at the end, please. We have a mic at the farthest end.

BENJAMIN AKINMOYEJE: Hello. My name is Benjamin Akinmoyeje, and I'm the NCUC Chair. So I'm going to talk to—I can't remember your name now. It's about the communication strategy. Yes. So Sally, thank you. So my question is, you said the first one has launched. So I saw everything about you and all of that, but I didn't get any piece of that that has to do with SubPro or anything because we really think awareness is important and we're not taking it for granted. So my take is which part of the SubPro was launched with the UAD? And we don't want to miss any piece of the awareness about the SubPro, so that is very important to us, and we want clear dates and agenda strategies that we can easily jump on and get people to know about it. Thank you.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you for the question. The launch was UAD-specific. So that's where we began the communication about universal acceptance and IDNs. When we begin the mini campaigns that I mentioned where we're taking three basic countries at a time, that's when we'll begin to start to socialize the concept of the new gTLD in the next round. So that will begin, I would say, by the beginning of July. That's what we're targeting. What we weren't intended to do (and I think this relates to another question that was online) is put the full details of the plan out, but what we will be doing is working with the GSE team to create awareness regionally of when each of those campaigns is going to begin.

BENJAMIN AKINMOYEJE: Thank you. Besides that, would it be possible also to make sure beyond the GSE that specific communities get this information appropriately as well?

Okay. Thank you.

BOB OCHIENG: Thank you very much, Benjamin.

So I think we have a few questions in the chat. Probably I'll ask Andrew, if you can, to read them out.

ANDREW CHEN: Sure. So, the first question that we received was from ... These are the questions we received from Jim Pendergast. "Where can one learn more about awareness campaigns that ICANN will be undergoing in several regions mentioned?" The second question is, "It was said that the closed generics would not be on the critical path. Does that mean resolution of the EPDP would not be a dependency for another round to launch? And thirdly, the last slide was for timeline considerations. However, there is no timeline presented on the slide. Would it be possible to actually have a time frame on these slides?"

[MICHAEL FLEMMING]: So that was [out of] some of my questions and I think Sebastien already answered question two, so we're good on that one. And then I think the

last gentleman's question kind of talked about question one as well, so I think we're good on that one. So just the last one then. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thank you, Michael. I'll answer that one on the timeline. So, you know, we have in their timeline considerations because one of the things that the Board has asked us to do is to be able to provide a timeline to by August 1st. And so what we're showing you here is what our thinking is, what our considerations are with how many quarters, how many months, given all of these milestones and what we know. So our expectation is that the actual timeline with dates comes in August.

BOB OCHIENG: Thank you very much, Karen.

So before I come to Jeff, I think—yeah, sure, please proceed.

JEFF NEUMAN: Thanks. I'll just be quick. I just want to clarify, because we consistently ask about trying to improve processes and procedures and it always gets thrown back to the community. My question was, what can ICANN Org do for the parts that are under its control to move the timeline more quickly. Something like the pre-evaluation program is almost entirely in ICANN Org's control at this point. I know there's a small part of it where we'll have to go to the IRT, and the IRT stands ready, willing, and able to look at it as soon as we can get it. So please, when I ask a question about what can ICANN Org do, it's not great to always turn that around and say, well, it's what the community will do. Because that's

not true in everything. And sorry, Seb, I was not referring to the GNSO stuff. But for things like the pre-evaluation program, you've got this six-month time period that has to be between when the list of providers are out there and when a window can open. And so things that we can do that are within ICANN Org's control would be ... I guess that's my question: is are there things you can do to speed it up a little bit?

BOB OCHIENG:

Thank you, Jeff. Probably I think this is really something we take note of. Of course, this work will proceed in parallel to as far as possible, and based on the information that we have at the moment. As you are clearly aware, any changes always brings a reiteration on what has already been done, and until the final AGB is actually produced, there's always potential to go back to what has already been done. But yes, it is progressing in parallel. If there is anything that can be done in the Org to make it faster, I am very sure it will definitely be done. But it is not just the Org, as we all know. There is a lot within the community and the Board as well. So it is collective, so to speak.

And I think with that, I will now give you the chance to ...

JIM PRENDERGAST:

Sure. So two questions. One, on the timeline, has that been shared with the Board, and what's their level of comfort with it?

And then secondly, Sally, I guess to you, with these three-month campaigns that are kicking off now, are you concerned about reputational risk to the organization by getting people excited about

this program and then telling them, “But you've got to wait three years”?

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: I really appreciate that question because yes, that is my concern. And that's why we're starting with universal acceptance and internationalized domain names in those developing countries: because there is risk to talking about it before we know the date, being concerned that it's going to push back exactly to what you said, Sebastien. There's more risk in us doing that and creating demand for something we can't deliver. And so yes. So that's a big part of the reasoning for starting where we are to kind of lay the foundation and be able to create awareness of all of the aspects that'll be important. Is that helpful?

Thank you.

BOB OCHIENG: Teresa?

THERESA SWINEHART: Thanks. I won't speak on behalf of the Board. You can ask the Board directly or the Board members that are here, but we most certainly have been sharing the timeline, keeping them apprised of the variables and where there's opportunities or explorations to shorten the timeline. So that information is being provided and shared on a regular basis with them.

I think, to the more general conversation, it goes without a doubt that we are all looking at how to intensify the work in different kinds of ways. This is not only a community aspect, this is not only an Org aspect, this is not only a Board aspect. this is all of us in it together. We've been through things like this before. We know how to do this and we know how to do it well as a community more generally. So certainly we're looking at how to bring people together to intensify resolution of different issues or within the organization, how we might make sure being consistent with our processes, procedures and fiduciary and other obligations as an organization serving the global community to shorten things or look at how to do things a little bit differently. So rest assured, I think we're all doing everything we can. And I certainly know from the intense conversations this week and leading into this week that the workload that everybody is carrying also from the community and the policy discussions and resolutions around those is quite intense.

So maybe it's a bit of a long-winded answer that I think we're all doing our best. And, yes, the Board is being kept apprised of the timeline, but I don't want to speak on behalf of the Board in the context of their specific views.

BOB OCHIENG:

Thank you, Theresa. I'll come back to my insight. And Ruben, I see you, so please proceed.

RUBENS KUHL: I'd just like to comment that making everything contingent on the Applicant Guidebook is known in computer systems development as the waterfall methodology where you need to do everything before moving forward, which is not something that is currently used in computer systems anymore. We use Agile and other methodologies. For instance, in the RSP pre-evaluation program, there is a very limited set of chapters from the Applicant Guidebook that needs to be ready for us to have an RSP pre-evaluation. And guess what? Since we changed almost nothing from 2012, those chapters are ready already. So we could look into parallelizing more, which was something that was said that we were doing, but when you look at the flow, it's actually a waterfall and not incremental and parallel systems. So that's what we would like to comment on. Thank you.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Thank you, Rubens. So if you look at the timeline, you can see that the interaction with the IRT is in the future. We put it in the first quarter of next year, and the work has already started, so we're not waiting for ... We're not following what are ... Ah, I cannot even speak ...

RUBENS KUHL: Waterfall.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Thank you. The waterfall approach here. We are already working on the requirements for the system, we are already working on the evaluation criteria, so we are not waiting for that interaction with the IRT. Certainly, if and when we get to the point when there is an interaction on the IRT

and there is input from the community that makes us change things, there will be rework that needs to happen, but we are well aware of that price that will need to be paid if something like that happens. But again, we are not following a waterfall approach.

RUBENS KUHL: Thank you.

BOB OCHIENG: Thank you very much.

Any additional questions at this moment?

ANDREW CHEN: We have one question in the queue, and it's from Michael Flemming. "There is just a question playing on curiosity, but is ICANN considering utilizing AI tools like ChatGPT to reduce some of the workload?"

BOB OCHIENG: Karen, do you want to say something on that?

KAREN LENTZ: Sure. So, while, as Teresa said we are exploring possibilities to accelerate and be creative on our approach, that hasn't been one thing that we've looked at at the moment.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Karen, the whole presentation was generated with ChatGPT.

[KAREN LENTZ]: In fact, none of us are actually people. We're just a computer sitting here. I think like all organizations and all individuals, this new form of technology and how to utilize it is something that one's looking at, but at this point we're still on the people part.

BOB OCHIENG: So, I see no further hands in the room and in the Zoom room.

Anyone before Jeff. Jeff, [make it a tweet.]

JEFF NEUMAN: Yeah. So, going forward, other than at ICANN meetings, is there a plan to be publishing monthly updates or some sort of regular updates from each of the groups on some site? Is there going to be something created for just these resources?

BOB OCHIENG: So Jeff, as you remember, part of the resolutions were to update progress before every ICANN meeting, two weeks before every ICANN meeting, on progress on the program. So if you have noticed, the first one was done before this meeting, and that will continue for the rest of the meetings until the program is open, or the opening date is actually done. So you can expect such updates two weeks prior to every ICANN public meeting going forward.

JEFF NEUMAN: Is there a way you can consider making that a little bit more frequent? Because that's every quarter. I mean, like you got the next meeting in October, then the one after that is March. Is there a way that you can make it more regular so that we can keep seeing updates and be confident that things are moving according to the schedule?

BOB OCHIENG: At the same time, you want to make updates that are actually significant, that demonstrate that something has actually been done since the last update. So as those actually become evident, yes. For example, there is a resolution requiring a report on the implementation plan by August first. That would be a significant update as per the resolutions. And going forward, in case there is nothing, there is a requirement for an update before every ICANN public meeting. So if there is an assessment or a significant update in between, definitely that should be also shared with the community. As Therasas said, it is a very iterative process in the process. There are lots of consultations between, of course, you, the community, and the Board. And in the process, even through those, I think you'll be completely impressed on the progress of the program.

Sally has a further comment on this.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Jeff, in addition to the formal updates, we will be providing more blogs than we have in the past to try to give more updates that way, because I think we want to strike the right balance of not having the team focused on the reporting, but the work. And so we'll try to find ways to

balance the two so that you have enough information that it feels like you know what's happening and the deadlines are being met. Is that helpful?

Yeah, it's specific.

BOB OCHIENG:

So, thank you very much.

And in the interest of time, I want to ask Karen to put any closing remarks for this session. So, Karen, over to you.

KAREN LENTZ:

Thank you, Bob. Thank you, everybody, for being here. It's exciting to see so many people in the room. And what you see here represents a lot of work, not just from the eight of us that you heard from, but from many people who are also here or not here who are working on this. And special thanks to Sebastien for going through all of the most recent council discussions from this week. So the team is around the rest of this meeting, so if you have more feedback, suggestions, or questions, feel free to come talk to us. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]