
ICANN79 | CF – UASG Governance and Plans Work Session
Tuesday, March 5, 2024 – 10:30 to 12:00 SJU

SEDA AKBULUT:

Hello and welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining the UASG Governance and Plans work session. My name is Seda 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. During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. Please read them aloud during the time set for the questions section. If you would like to ask your question or make your comment verbally, please raise your hand. When called upon, you will be given permission to unmute your microphone. Interpretation for this session will include English, French and Spanish. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak, if speaking a language other than English. Please speak at a reasonable pace. And with that, I will now hand the floor over to UASG Chair Anil Kumar Jain. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Seda. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all participants who are physically present at San Juan in ICANN 79 and to all online participants who are with us. Today's update is on two aspects. One is that UASG is working on drafting and designing the five-year strategic plan, starting from FY25 to FY29. And the good thing is that we are almost through with the plans. However, in this session, we

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would like to take inputs initially from all of you participants. And later on, we will be opening these five-year plans for the community feedback and update also.

And the second part of today's session is the governance. UASG is working for improving the governance. Although we started in 2015 and we have already completed eight years of our existence as UASG, and I think it is a time for us to look at the governance, the procedures, the structure of UASG with the changing needs of UASG. And we would like to take your inputs before we give the final shape to this governance also.

So the session overflow is like this. Initially, we will be talking about five-year strategic plan. And here we have four working groups under UASG. Every working group chair will be talking about their working group five-year strategic plan, what they have designed. And then we will open for the community feedback from all of you. And the second portion will be the governance, as I said. And we will also discuss about what we have already decided and what is on the table for discussion. And here also we would like to seek your feedback on what should be the right governance model for UASG. Next slide, please.

So Universal Acceptance Strategy Group is committed to ensure that all domain names and email addresses, they are equitable. They should be accepted by all software and hardware. All computing devices should be validated, should be processed, should be stored, and then should be displayed at the recipient side. So when we are drawing the strategic plan, it includes that what is the status today in achieving these goals

and what is the gap. And we would like to fill up those gaps as far as possible in the next five-year plan. Next slide, please.

Now let us see the two part. One is the email address internationalization. And if you see the progress for the last five years from 2017 to 2022, we have seen that there is a good uptake, especially on a long domains. But the uptake on the local language domains is picking up. Somewhere we have reached 100% or close to 100% in the long domains. But if we talk about domains in local languages, for example, Arabic or Chinese, I think we are close to 10%. The second graph, which is available on the right side, shows that overall the email addresses acceptance has reached about 23% plus. This 23% includes both L1 support as well as L2 support. L1 support is when an email address or server is able to send an email from an IDN domain or email and receive it. And L2 is when that email server is able to create a new email on its own in local language. Next slide, please.

Now, the goals which we have set up in front of us for the next five years are for the websites, 50% support for the EAI should be there. It means that 50% of the website should be able to accept and use the emails which are in language other than English. But 99% of the website should accept the long or short ASCII TLDs. Similarly, for email servers, as I said that 50% of the email server should be able to support L2 or gold level by FY29. And 90% of the email server should be able to support L1 or silver level. So these are very aggressive targets which UASG has kept in front of us. And we are committed that with the support of all supporting organizations and all stakeholders, this is a goal which is achievable. Next slide, please.

Now, to promote this UA adoption, the UASG leadership has formed three strategic motivators and groups who can help us to reach to this level. The one is the government. So government, which I have understood or which we have understood is most of the demand side are generated by government. So it is very important for government to be part of us and should promote the UA, especially in their procurement policies. Then big techs. Big techs means Google, Apple, Microsoft. These companies, they touch maximum number of internet users. So it is very important that UA should be part of their long strategies and they should be able to work aggressively on adoption of UA.

Third aspect is a very important one, the people who actually provide internet to the people and also who manage the domains. So DNS industry and service providers are third important area where we are focusing on this. And we are continuously working with technology enablers, technology developers, email tools and service providers, government, academia, TLD registries and registers. Next slide, please.

The framework, time framework which we have kept in front of us is that we would like to hand over the five-year strategic plan after getting approval from the community by June 2024. It means that before ICANN 80, the five-year strategic plan in completeness will be available for all stakeholders. Next slide, please.

Now we will go to various working groups one by one. Next slide, please.

So here before I hand over this to the working group chairs, as a chair of UASG, I would like to thank the entire working group members, their leadership, the local initiative members and their initiatives and UA

ambassadors who have worked in defining this strategic work. And we are receiving inputs from all experts on this particular paper. Next slide, please.

So these are the four areas where we are working, is the measurement group, technology group, EAI working group and communication working group. So let us start with one by one. So all these things which are written will be available when we are discussing individually the individual working groups. So I think the first one is measurement working group. So I request Dr. Nabil Benamar, who is the chair of measurement working group, to take us through the five-year strategic plan which they have drafted for next five years. Over to you, Dr. Nabil.

NABIL BENAMAR:

Thank you, Anil. Thank you, everyone, for joining this session. This is Nabil Benamar, for the record, the UASG vice chair and UASG measurement working group chair. So I'm happy to present what we have done so far and what is our action plan. So one of the main things that we are working on right now is to present and prepare curriculum for universities that update IT-related curricula to include IDN and universal acceptance in the modules that we have. We have developed currently a set of micro-modules, and you can go to the ICANN community website to see the details and the content. Now it's available for everyone. It's publicly available, and any faculty can get the content from there and start implementing it in its own curricula. The curriculum now integrates 12 micro-modules. We try to see and to cover all existing courses related to computer science majors like Unicode in databases system, Unicode programming fundamentals,

Unicode advanced programming, advanced topics in international domain names, email address internationalization, Unicode IDN security, and so on.

The second work is that we are working on is the write-up of the opportunities in using IDN 2008 and on the shortcoming of IDN 2003. This is something that is in progress, and we are targeting 2025 to finish this work. So same thing for email packages. We are rating email software using EAI self-certification guide as the phase number one. And for business, we want to update, we are working on updating the 2017 document that we have that showcased the \$9.8 billion opportunity for business. This is a study to showcase the UA implementation's benefit for businesses. So we are now updating this document to showcase the real benefits for business.

As for the Android platform, we work on characterizing how much Android platform limits the acceptance of IDNs in web browsing. The work is still in progress. HTML5 email field, too. So we collect data to identify how to address HTML5 email field for accepting globally inclusive email addresses as identifiers. Next slide, please.

For our action plan for 2025 for business. So the task is to do a research, market research, to identify growing email or social media products which compete on UA support. Then we want to study and to amplify the customer problems, making them visible to product owners, to identify competitors, alert them to potential issues, and motivates early fixes to win the market. So this is a work that we are doing, and we are planning to finish this between 2025 and 2029.

The UA adoption success stories through UA Day, and this is also one of the outcomes of the UA Day, since we are targeting now the adoption, more UA-related activities for adoption rather than just awareness. And this will showcase the success stories of enterprises, governments, organizations that have been able to implement UA in their system. That talk about business benefits also versus the cost balance and impacts, technical and economical challenges.

For the supply and demand, targeting to finish this work between 2026 and 2027, to become experts in creating conversations between email buyers and sellers, government policy makers, business economic decision makers, understand the business demand for UA readiness, and showcase the UA value. This is also related to the business that we have mentioned earlier. Publicly list the UA ready system software, presenting them as top international quality, and maintain a list of qualified companies offering services for IDNA. So this will bring the competition between all these competitors in international level. Next slide, please.

For the action plan 3, [inaudible]. Here we are showcasing the between free email services, open source software with the proprietary software. Doing also a gap analysis. This is one of our day-to-day work, gap analysis of the e-commerce platforms and the more content management systems. We have initiated this before, but now we are continuing on this way by assessing more platforms. Periodic measurements on website and email servers to showcase the UA readiness. This is also one of our day-to-day work, and we are targeting to finish this work between 25 and 29.

Another topic is to measure the UASG effectiveness. Now we want to assess our own work and the impact of our work on the UA readiness and deployment and adoption worldwide. To figure out what worked and what didn't, and then plan to do more of what had worked out. So this should be done every year. Understand the strategic situation and reach consensus with the UASG on how to overcome the challenges related to the adoption of UA. Finally, targeting 2026 to finish this to find ways of bringing active Internet users from youth groups at the IG ecosystem into UASG platform to share their insights. I think it's all. Next slide, please.

So now we'd like to gather insight, feedback, and suggestions from you. Are these actionable items reasonable? Are the stakeholders in focus the right ones? Any other comments on the action plan which UASG needs to take to meet the goals are welcome. Thank you.

SEDA AKBULUT:

Thank you, Nabil. Thanks, Dennis, for raising hands. Floor is yours.

DENNIS TAN:

Thank you, Seda. Dennis, Verisgin. Can we go back to the first slide on the action plan, Nabil, please? Oh, sorry, Seda is the one. I think the measurement one where you talk about that UA curriculum. So is that work already published and available for use, or is it still in comment or editorial work?

NABIL BENAMAR:

Thank you, Dennis. Yes, it's already published on the website, ICANN website community. And we have the modules there, and all modules are -- links are clickable, so we can go to the content. Yes, it's still -- we are requesting comment from and feedback from the community on this. So we can still improve the content there based on the feedback that we can receive. But each module, you can see that it's between 20 and 30 pages, so the content is already there.

DENNIS TAN:

And the reason I'm interested in that, because I've seen -- and I've reviewed one of the modules. And I say this with love and care, because I was part of this community, and I pretty much want it to success. As the UASG wants to, you know, reach more audiences and put more information in the hands of the ones that can actually do, right? Like the IT, software development, computer science majors, or what have you, that the information, that the quality of materials that you are putting out there, it should be of the highest quality. And so in my review, I found in module, I think 11, IDN security, statements or just things that are not factually correct. And so I would urge or encourage the UASG, not volunteers reviewing, but the UASG itself, going through a very thorough, critical review of the information that is in there. And I'm happy after this to go and find those statements that I found incorrect or, you know, could be presented in a better way, I would say. Or correct way.

NABIL BENAMAR:

Thank you very much, Dennis. Yes, definitely, when you are preparing a content related to IT in general, the most active point is security. So

definitely this particular chapter or module or content will need a lot of improvement day by day. And we will discover more security vulnerabilities in the -- when we are adopting and deploying IDN in large scale for all languages, for all scripts. And we will need to definitely to improve this, like any standard that we move from draft to the standard or to the RFC. So here we are seeking feedback from the community and from you as one of the leaders of measurement working group. So, yes, very happy to hear from you. What are your comments on the content? And we can still definitely improve it. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Dennis. And thank you, Dr. Nabil. I request all other participants also, in case they have any questions, please keep the questions with you.

SEDA AKBULUT:

There is one more question or comment from [Maddy.] Please unmute yourself.

[MADDY:]

Hi, I'm [Maddy.] I'm a NextGen [inaudible] ICANN 79. I'm speaking on my own behalf. Thank you very much for this presentation. Dr. Sarmad, you actually are the one who got me interested in IDNs and into the ICANN - - teach me about ICANN anyways. So my comment actually is just that the UA curriculum, I was just looking at it online. It is wonderful in that it looks like you have tailored it so that people without any technological knowledge can still benefit. As Dennis just mentioned, they found some inaccuracy. I was really hoping to be able to show this

curriculum to my professor for them to start talking more about it in our classroom, as my field of localization is very much related to getting UA ready. Is there any way we can keep -- to make sure that we are updated on those corrections that you will be making?

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you. Thank you, [Maddy.] And I think it is an important comment, which you have made. And not only on behalf of the NextGen, but I think for all of us that this is a new initiative which Measurement Working Group has taken. And we hope that this new initiative will go in a long way in preparing the new generation to not only adopt, but influence the new adoption. And Dr. Nabil has already said that the improvement is a continuous process. And we will definitely ensure that whatever inputs we receive will be taken care of this. Thank you. Now we have a next question from the audience in the room. Please introduce yourself.

KRISLIN GOULBOURNE-HARRY: Yes. Hello, everyone. My name is Krislin Goulbourne-Harry from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I am an ICANN 79 fellow and I'm also a UA ambassador. My question is related to funding outside of the UA Day. So are there any funding apart from the one that is provided by the At-Large grant program for UA projects? And is there any possibility that UA ambassadors can become consultants for UA implementations? Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you. So you have two questions. One is whether UA funding, especially from the ALAC, is available from outside, right?

KRISLIN GOULBOURNE-HARRY: Okay, so I am aware of the UA Day funding that is provided by UASG. I just recently found out that there is additional funding that is available through the At-Large grant that can support UA projects.

ANIL JAIN: So basically the question is that as far as UA Day celebration is concerned, the funding is provided to the selected organizing events, which are 56 total as of date. And we are going to have a detailed deliberation on UA Day tomorrow at 9:00 in the morning. Now the ALAC is a different organization, and of course they will be the best suited organization to answer your second question. But the grant which ALAC is giving is different than the grant which is, or you can say the funding which is organized by UASG.

KRISLIN GOULBOURNE-HARRY: Right. So I was asking if there is any additional funding available from UASG apart from the one that is given for the UA Day.

NABIL BENAMAR: And I think let me ask Seda in case she can answer this question.

SEDA AKBULUT: Thank you. So the budget for the UASG is divided into separate sections which are already published on the action plan annually. So there is funding for the UA ambassador and also for the UA Day. But if there are any other actions listed in the action plan, we also have some budget

for it, but for the additional items we don't have it for just now. It should be in the action plan. In the interest of time we can move to the tech working group and then we will have another. Anil—

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE: Can I quickly provide a follow up, quickly. The funding she's talking about is the ICANN funding grants, which is kind of, yes, UA Day is included, UA event is included.

ANIL JAIN: We have the chair [of tech with us, Satish Babu,] with us who is involved in the ALAC also. I request you to kindly have a discussion with him offline. Thank you.

SATISH BABU: Yeah, I'll just mention that ALAC has specific funding for projects, all kinds of projects, one of which can be, that's called ABR, additional budget request. So if a RALO wants to do some work on UA, then they can apply. And it's not very easy to get through, but you can do that. But what AK said just now, is a much larger funding, ICANN grant program, which launches this month. And that's for funds ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000. It's a much larger kind of funding. So thanks, Anil, and I'll move on to—

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: One question.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Great, thank you. And thank you for mentioning the ICANN grant program. This is a newly launched program I think would be of interest, and I will actually select the link to Seda and ask her to put that in the chat. I encourage you to take a look at it. We're looking for innovation. The program is open. We've allocated an initial \$10 million to that. So I hope to hear there is a UA project approved in the near future. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN: Thank you for information to all who are listening. And now I want to invite Satish Babu, who is the chair of the Tech Working Group, to take us through the Tech Five-Year Strategic Plan.

SATISH BABU: Thanks very much. This is the plan for the Tech Working Group from 2025 to 2029. Some of it is very clear as of now. Some of it is still evolving. And I will not be getting into details of everything, but we'll touch upon the highlights. So the Tech Working Group normally works through a cycle of repeating, for example, the first one. We keep doing it every year because it's a continuous activity. There are new platforms emerging which we have to test. So it's an ongoing process to test whether these stacks are compliant with UA. There are some strategy issues, and this we are trying to address through a multi-phase survey, the first phase of which is over, and the draft report is out. In the last meeting, we had provided some highlights. We are trying to kind of

create a proper report out of it. It may take some more time, but it will come out.

Now, this draft report is actually fed into some of the things that we are discussing in this five-year plan. The third is the remediation, which means fixing problems. So we have this IMAP servers and POP3 servers, some of which are not compliant. So, for instance, Dovecot, which is number three IMAP server, it has some problems with it. So we try to do remediation by writing code and handing it over to the community of Dovecot. But they have some difficulty to merge it, so we're still trying to figure out how to kind of take it forward. So that's something that we have to work for the future. So, next slide, please.

So some of it is ongoing. The second item here is how to manage or how to configure a CMS, content management system, for compliance. So this is a step-by-step thing that anybody, any administrator of a network can do. So we are hoping that that will get people or motivate people to start using or start ensuring that their system becomes UA compliant.

The next item on education actually has been inspired by one of our group members who's from Sri Lanka. The government of Sri Lanka has mandated that all the government websites must be UA ready. So the problem was that nobody knew what is the meaning of being UA ready for a website. So Harsha, who's from Sri Lanka, he's been working on this project, kind of mini project for Sri Lanka, but we're trying to amplify it and take it across the world so that we have some guidelines on what is it, what is the meaning of being UA ready for a general website. And that will make it easy to kind of test and, you know, certify.

Then we have ideas for a hackathon. The last item here is actually, although it's just one line, it is extremely important. We are reading for the next round of new gTLDs. And one of the highlights of the next round is that we are going to make IDN variants available for the first time ever. We have had IDNs from 2012, but IDN variants, this is the first time we have kind of putting it out there.

Now, we are not sure as of now, what are the UA impact for IDN variants. So this requires more study. There are multiple, for example, if you have two ways of writing a single label, suppose you take the Chinese label HSBC, which is a bank, it can be written in two ways in Chinese, and both are equivalent for the language community. So these are variants. However, for the DNS infrastructure, these are completely different. So the language community thinks this is the same. The DNS thinks this is different. So the challenge is what kind of consensus policy we can develop in order to ensure that these are tied into one bundle. But then it has downstream impact. What happens if you have email IDs created from these? Should they behave identically? If you have websites, if you write one of them, then should it go to either of them? So these are some of the questions that are being asked. We are planning a study to figure out, before the launch of the new round, which is happening in the second quarter of 2026, to kind of study this problem. It is actually a fairly deep problem. It's not at all trivial. So we are trying to get help from other parts of IDN. Next.

So minimal working code samples. We have already put out for some languages. We are continuing that work. That's the first one, remediation. So I will look at some of the bigger ones. Collaboration. How can we work with other relevant stakeholders, including the

Unicode Consortium or IETF? Is it possible to plan for an annual event from next year onwards that will bring together all the contemporary challenges that we are facing so that we can get an informed opinion from different stakeholders?

The last one is basically on standards. There was this question as to, can we... Now, for example, the accessibility has standards. The W3C has multiple standards for accessibility. One for the end-user people and one for the back-end developers, etc. Is it possible to make UA as a standard? So that requires exploration, and we are trying to see how we can persuade W3C. So we are trying to access W3C, basically, to tell them, look, why don't you take this up as well? Next.

That's it. So I'll be happy to answer any questions, and we request your participation. Please join the UA Tech Working Group. We don't have too many people at the moment. So if you are interested in this technical line, please join us. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Satish. Any questions? First of all, from the audience and community inside the room, and then in case we have any questions, Seda, from online.

SEDA AKBULUT:

There is no online question at the moment, but one general question for you, Anil, from Dr. Mark Miller. Chair, why does the five-year plan, like a vision or objective for the organization, is just focusing on the work of several working groups with no time frames, milestones, or

budgets? What is expected from the community to contribute to this half-made thing?

ANIL JAIN:

So basically, this is a generic question, not specific to the Tech Working Group. So Mark, thank you very much for this question, and it is an important question. First is that this five-year strategic plan, if you see that they are result-oriented. As I said initially that these five-year strategic plans are looking at some figures which we are going to achieve at the end of five years. And I also said that these five-year strategic plans are the guidelines and the path which we are defining for us. But I want to just tell you that it is not possible for UASG alone to achieve this. It is all stakeholders who have to work together. And initially, as I said, these are not only the statements which UASG is publishing, but they will be converted into action plans which are mapped to the results which we will be measuring on year-to-year basis. So please wait for the strategic plan which will be finalizing and handing over for the community to comment, hopefully by end of April. Then I think you will be able to get answers to all your questions. Thank you, Mark. Anybody inside the room?

SATISH BABU:

I see a question here in the chat. And I also see a hand in the chat, but let me answer this question from Lee Saweon. “It is surprising to see UASG conducting work that should be done by original software creators and vendors. There is a clear conflict of interest on how ICANN policy allows this to happen in the UASG.” Right now, we are not talking about developing entire application software. We are looking at a

particular software and we are identifying some critical gaps. This has nothing to do with the entire stack of software. It has to do with certain critical gaps that are there. And we have in the past, ever since the UASG was launched, we have commissioned code that will cover this particular gap. So, be very clear about this. We are not talking about building the entire software. We are just looking at patching certain gaps that can be patched. Right.

PAULO MILLIET ROQUE:

Good morning, everyone. My name is Paulo Milliet Roque. I am the president of ABES, the Brazilian Software Association. We have done some research for UASG a couple of years ago with Mark Datysgeld and a couple of other people from UASG. My question is, today, when we are writing, let's say, an engine or Chinese to act on a domain name, they get translated to ASCII codes because the system doesn't support it directly. Is there any plan that you can write directly the names on emails and on domain names and doesn't need to be translated in order to work?

SATISH BABU:

Yes, thank you for the question. So, the difficulty here is that the basic DNS infrastructure can only handle ASCII. Now, the front ends can handle any script, but the backend and the underlying infrastructure can only handle ASCII. So, therefore, for the DNS to work, we have to finally convert it into a form that the DNS system understands, and that is ASCII. So, earlier the problem was that when you type a certain script on your web browser, that gets converted into ASCII. You'll see X and dash dash like that. But today, that problem is solved. The browser can

show you the actual script, although under the hood it is still using this X and dash dash. But the display will show the actual script. So, that problem is getting resolved. But the underlying problem is never going to be resolved because the infrastructure cannot handle non-ASCII.

PAULO MILLIET ROQUE: So, can I just repeat to see if I understood? The underlying level cannot be resolved by the way the web software or the software that handles it is designed. Is that?

SATISH BABU: Yeah, that will be a huge transformation. Dennis, do you want to answer this? The question is can the underlying DNS be modified to directly handle these scripts?

DENNIS TAN: Well, the short answer is no. This goes back more than 20 years ago when the whole IDN concept came to live. There were a few experiments which ended up leading up to IDN in 2008, right, in 2010. But the DNS underlying works, or underlying infrastructure works on ASCII only. And so the way that IDNs or Unico domain names that is, for that matter, is to find a way to retrofit Unico into ASCII and by the way of the Punicodo algorithm, right, that transforms into a ASCII only string. And then we append the XN dash dash in order to identify that those strings are IDN strings. But, yeah, it would have been great if the DNS was Unicode based and not ASCII based and then we would not be talking about that. But the reality is that, yeah, the DNS works ASCII only. That's behind the wire. And one of the goals of universal

acceptance is that recognizes how the DNS works, but from a user standpoint, the user experience should not be exposed to the wire label, right? It's the Unicode label, the display that needs to go to the end user.

SATISH BABU:

Dmitry's question is about on what basis have you chosen the testing stacks? So actually what's happened is we have been looking at the impact. What is the most -- because we're going to spend some time and money on this -- what is the most impactful software stack that we should look at? So we have gone by certain standards, meaning they kind of check out and say which is being used maximally. So we are looking at the maximum benefit for the maximum number of users. And that's the principle we have gone by. There is a certain amount of judgment by the members of the tech working group. So what I would suggest is if you have an alternative suggestion, please come and join us and tell us what your suggestion is so that we can incorporate that particular aspect also. As of now, we are looking at what is the most popular software, and we're trying to look at that particular -- you know, fixing those things. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Satish, and thank you for wonderful questions and information to all. Now I'm inviting Mark, who is chair of email address internationalization, and I request Mark to complete his presentation in the next seven minutes. Over to you, Mark. Thank you.

MARK SVANCAREK:

All right. Thanks a lot. Hi, everybody. I'm Mark. I'm the chair of the internationalized email address working group. Here's our action plan. We have a severe chicken and egg problem in the email world. We've discussed this a little bit in regard to all parts of UASG, but in email it's more complicated because it's hard to make these things work with legacy systems. In fact, email is inherently not backwards compatible when you talk about internationalization. So it has to be fixed on both ends, at least to some degree, what we call a level one degree, and getting the vendors to do anything is pretty challenging. So we have to demonstrate that there is some sort of market interest for this, and that's working on both sides of the equation. One of them is reaching out to the vendors who have the most impact. The other is demonstrating how systems perform when actually tasked with internationalized, with universal acceptance tasks.

So what you'll see on our five-year plan is a big focus on self-certification and dealing with supply and demand. Our biggest task, the one that is the longest lead, is building an actual self-certification program. In previous years, we've been focusing on a guide to tell people, "How do you know that you have achieved a level of compatibility? How do you test yourself?" Now we're going beyond that and figuring out how do you get those scores self-generated? How can the community build a site where somebody can go and find out who is certified? How can we do this within the ICANN policies? I saw there was some information in the chat, people worried about the anti-corruption policies. Let me tell you, we are very constrained by those policies. We are taking them very, very seriously, and it's actually quite a challenge to deal with it.

Another thing that we're working on is helping people to self-host EAI systems so that they can test whether it meets their needs or not. Again, this is a place where we can't just take something off the shelf and help people to self-host it because that might violate a policy. So we're limited to working on open-source solutions, which are easy to configure and easy for people to move around. It's a statement of work to get a vendor to help us do this because there are no off-the-shelf solutions that we could use.

Our third line there is, again, figuring out who are the customers, who are the providers, finding a way to get them to be aware of each other. How do we publicize them in a way that is not in violation of the policy? Then we have the usual sort of education things. We'd like to create something like the ICANN Wiki. If you're familiar with that old site, it's actually pretty handy for getting to know people and understanding their interests. And building some sort of a wiki like this for sharing resources, it'll be a lot more flexible and agile than trying to work within the UASG site as it is today. We also are working with the technical community, places like Stack Overflow. There's a lot of questions about UA on these sites, and a lot of them are old or wrong. And we are going to continue to address those questions that are old and wrong on those sites and try to upvote the answers that are new and correct. And then the last item there, again, is engaging market share leaders. If you have any concerns about how that impacts policy, please join the working group and we can discuss. Next slide.

Self-certification, we started with a guide. Now we're trying to build an entire program. So we released the self-certification guide quite some time ago. We're still calling it a beta, but frankly, it's been done and

stable for a long time. We'll continue to create education materials on how to use the guide. We have a couple of people who are very adept with using it, and a lot of testing has been performed using it. But we don't know if it's easy for people who are getting started, so more education is required.

Once you've done the self-certification, right now you have to calculate your scores using a spreadsheet. It actually works pretty well, but there's a bunch of edge cases that are not always clear, and people are asking for help. So coming up with some simple code to automate this process and generate the score, we think that that will be very helpful. Figuring out how to do a registry of the vetted certification scores, this is a challenge. And, again, this challenge is related to policy. ICANN actually operates a website that shows which solutions have been tested. This is debatable. I may need to create this out of my own pocket. Join the working group if you have better ideas. Accepting scores, confirming the process, these are other tasks that are related to these things. Next slide. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Mark, and thank you very much for restricting yourself with the time frame. Now we can take up one or two questions before we move to communication working group.

SEDA AKBULUT:

Thank you, Mark. Thank you, Anil. Yes, we have a question, so please use the Q&A pod for the online participants for raising your questions or comments. One question from Harish. "I have created a data set of

60K IDN domain names. How this could be useful for the research and measurements for measurement and technology working group?”

SATISH BABU:

Thanks very much. Thanks, Harish, for this compilation of IDN domain names. I think this can turn out to be useful because when we start the periodic testing of compliance, I mean, readiness, we can fit in these names also. I'm assuming that this can be sorted in some way of popularity because we don't want to take some obscure site, but something that's reasonably popular. We can certainly use it in the process of assessment that we are periodically doing. So thanks for the offer.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you. Thank you, Satish. Any other questions, Seda? Online?

SEDA AKBULUT:

There is one just comment, but no questions or comments about the EAI working group at the moment. The comment is from Akshat Joshi about ICANN grants program funding. Some very good initiatives at UASG level are ongoing with the top-down approach. It will be wonderful to have an at-scale web dev program aimed at local small-scale vendors so that the demand is driven from bottom of the pyramid upwards. It is one of the main thing that drives open source communities to prioritize code enhancements.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Akshat, for your comment, and these comments will be quite useful for UASG. Thank you very much. Now let us go to the last working group presentation before we go to the governance. Next slide, please.

Now as a communication working group itself means that whatever work is undertaken by the tech working group, measurement working group, EAI working group, the communication working group has to communicate and take this work to the community, and that community can be ICANN community or any other community and the multi-stakeholder.

So we have listed out certain items which we would like to take up in the next five years. On the last, you must have seen that on the right-hand side we have a column where it is written that whether the work is to be done every year or not, and most of the work virtually has to be undertaken every year. So here in the communication strategy, we are not only on regular basis gathering, verifying, and updating the most comprehensive knowledge on the UA and distributing this to the community, but we are also talking to those people who influence the decisions and to the others. For example, we are also planning to get in touch with the opinion leaders, the influencers, and also the journalists in every category to take this information to the next level.

The second important thing which I want to inform you that if you see the last one is develop and update the UASG communication channels. So UASG would like to utilize not only the websites, but the social media platform, community page, and also the collaborative publication to improve the communication to the next level. I just want to inform you

that UASG is utilizing the social media successfully for the last three years, and the results are amazing. Next slide, please.

And we have also discussed the first two ones. And the third is very important, is the public relation. In addition to the communication media channels which are either free or paid, public relation becomes a very, very important aspect when we are influencing or we are spreading information. So first is that we have undertaken a very important work of UA Day celebration since FY23, which has actually spread the information and awareness about UA to a large extent. But now here we are seeing that every year we'll invite the local journalist on the UA Day and encourage them to conduct the interviews. I just want to inform you that last global UA Day celebration at New Delhi, there were, if I remember correctly, more than 15 interviews of chair UASG ICANN and interim CEO and presidents' interviews were conducted at New Delhi.

Then we are also talking about launching the professional PR and marketing campaign, targeting the key audience, not in generic audience. And as Dr. Nabil has said, we are undertaking a revised study for understanding the economic benefit. Those have to be spread to the community at large.

So here we are talking about engaging the members at various levels. For example, starting the UA adoption with the UASG members. This time on the UA Day celebration, we have taken UA adoption as the main focus area in addition to the UA awareness. We are also planning to motivate the technical decision makers to adopt the UA and also to encourage the startups, commercial companies, academia to drive the

system. And as I initially said, the government forms a very important group and community for adoption of UA. So increasing the government representation to the UASG meetings and UA Day. Just two days back in ICANN79, we had a common session with the Government Advisory Council and they have promised a complete together working on UA promotion in the future. Next slide please.

So with this, we complete the information which UASG would like to share with all of you on the progress we have made on designing the five-year strategic plan. And as I initially informed you that we are going to complete this job and present to the community and to the ICANN well before ICANN 80. Now before we move to the governance part, in case there is any question on overall strategy which is presented till now, I will be more than happy to take those questions. Seda, any question?

SEDA AKBULUT:

Thank you Anil and everyone. No, there are no questions or hands in the Zoom room at the moment. Please feel free to raise your hands if you have any comments on the communications action plan or for the other working groups. So we can continue maybe the next plan and to see if we have further questions later on.

ANIL JAIN:

So in case you have any questions on this, we can take up those questions at the end of the presentation and information on the governance. Now as far as the governance is concerned, as I said that the basic objective is that we should be able to have the complete

transparency in the working of UASG, complete accountability in the working and most important is that the process should be totally open and it should be available to all stakeholders within the UA community.

So based on the consensus, the first work which UASG has undertaken is to introduce the Statement of Interest mechanism and this was informed in the last ICANN 78 at Hamburg and I am very happy to inform all the members and community here that UASG has adopted introduction of SOI and we have requested ICANN staff to introduce SOI as early as possible. And I am told by the staff that they are ready with the SOI and we hope that SOI for all existing UASG members will be completed by June by giving two months to three months to all the existing members of UASG. And it is also mandatory for all new members who are joining the UASG to fill up their SOI before they are accepted as members. And as we had a discussion yesterday also, SOI may not be the only criteria for bringing the transparency but we will keep on adding more governance procedures as we get inputs from all of you.

So this is the SOI implementation targets which we have that we announced announcement of SOI implementation as we have done and then we are requesting the members to submit their SOI form by May and by 30th of June we will publish the SOI by ICANN. So this is the first step and I am very happy that the entire community has agreed to work on it. But at the same time here, I just want to inform that in case some existing member of UASG are not able to fill up their SOI in time, they will have the opportunity to rejoin UASG community and rejoin with the SOI form. So we will ensure that none of the existing member is left out from the community at all.

So what we desire is that in case you can give us your inputs on the timelines which I have just explained to you on behalf of the UASG leadership and if you have any comments, specific comment or suggestion you want to give on the SOI implementation process, we will be more than happy to do that.

Now in addition to the SOI, we have one is the top leadership where the chair UASG and three vice chair UASGs are there. Then we work with four working groups which have chair and two vice chairs that is measurement working group, technical tech working group, EAI working group and communication working group. In addition to these four working groups, we have two more groups or you can say community which work.

One is the local initiative, they are country based or regional based initiatives to undertake the UA related work on the ground level. And the second is the UA ambassador, those individuals who are technically trained and they are ready to take the challenge to go to the community, to make the community aware about UA, help the technical adopters and providers to guide them about the work undertaken by UASG and help them for adoption. So that is the UA ambassador program which we have.

So here we are also working on concept of the duration of the leadership, the process of selection of the leadership and what should be the criteria for those aspects to be undertaken in the governance process. To take you through this what is on the table—and of course nothing is finalized, this particular session is to take more input from you rather than informing you what we have decided. So decision is in

the process and we hope that by September 2024 all these things which are on the table should get a final shape on this. Now I invite Dr. Nabil to take us through what is on the table for the future discussions on the governance of UASG.

NABIL BENAMAR:

Yeah, so continuing on what we have presented so far with Anil. So there are some additional governance topics that are being discussed right now. Mainly the duration of the UASG working group leadership position, holding multiple leadership positions by UASG coordination working group members. So currently we have some members that are holding multiple leadership positions because of some historical facts. But this is something that can be changed based on the feedback that we can receive from the community.

Role of the UASG leadership working group and their charter, bringing more transparency of information accessible to the community, planning and budgeting the process, establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of resource utilization. And this is something also that we have discussed in the previous slides about self-assessment of the UASG in whole and the impact of the UASG. But now we are referring to the effectiveness of the resource utilization by UASG.

Then we have regular review of the effectiveness of the governance plan and operational process that can be updated based on the review that we can receive from and the comments we receive from the community. We are always open to hearing from our community suggestions, comments that we can implement, we can consider so

that we can implement it if we have the consensus. And based on these discussions the UASG intends to update its existing charter. Next slide.

So now it's your turn. Our community, if you like, to gather insights, any feedback from you are welcome. What are your thoughts on the proposed changes in the UASG structure regarding UASG working group vice chair positions, regarding UASG leadership elections? Any other comments on how to improve the UASG governance is more than welcome. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Nabil, for taking us through various subjects under discussion at the UASG level. Ladies and gentlemen, this is an opportunity for you to give your feedback and your suggestion in the process of improving the governance of UASG as on date. So now I open the floor for you to raise your hand, give your suggestion, advice to us, and we'll take all those advice very seriously and we'll include in the whole process.

SEDA AKBULUT:

Thank you, Nabil. There is one question from the room. Dennis. Thank you.

DENNIS TAN:

Thank you, Anil. So question about the governance on leadership position. Maybe a question first and then react to it. Is there a problem of volunteer shortage such that you want to—not that a member holds multiple positions. in my experience reflecting on my own experience,

2019-2021, there was lack of people coming forward to hold leadership positions. So that's one, right? So it was not that we were overwhelmed by volunteers wanting to hold working group chairs or even vice chairs, one second, what have you. That's one, right? Because I'm seeing that you want to potentially give opportunity, but maybe that has changed. That's what I'm asking, whether there is a short problem such that you are going to that direction, which if that's the case, should be fine.

Also, the other thing, maybe it goes in contrary or goes in the different direction as to what you are planning to go into having not one member holding more than one position. I think in my experience, I found it useful—for context, I was serving as vice chair of the UASG, but also was serving as working group chair of the measurement working group. And I found that experience helpful because I was hands on on the work of measurement working group and I believe I was a good, effective advocate of that work rolling up to the UASG admin group.

So as vice chair of the UASG, know the experience, know the work, what's going on, and I can relate that back to the admin group. And of course, the UASG coordination is everybody, right? All the leadership working group positions, vice chairs, and working group chairs and vice chairs as well. So again, the question is, is there a problem of not enough volunteers that you want to provide ample opportunity, or what's the problem you're trying to solve?

One other thing that I think, again, reflecting on my own experience on the governance side and how you select leadership positions, and I know this is already planned, but maybe in the future consider a staggering terms such that when you renew leadership, it's not like the

whole group is going out and then a new one and there's some loss of institutional knowledge, right? And cadence as far as it works. So maybe something to consider for future. A staggering maybe one or all the three leadership positions, chair and vice chair, they go one by one and you're refreshing by thirds, right? So that you carry on on the knowledge and the work and it's not a reset every, I don't know, two years or something along those lines. So thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Dennis. Two questions which you have raised. One is that is there any problem in people opting for the leadership position? Answer to this is yes and no, both. Initially, you're right. The current situation is because there were less volunteer to take the leadership position. But now it appears that for the last two years, a good number of people are volunteering to work for UASG. And we are able to get more volunteers for all working groups, whether it is tech working group, measurement working group, communication working group, or EAI working group. So we definitely are looking for giving more opportunities to more number of people and more number of people means the wise decision to be taken.

One more thing which we are also working on is to reconsider the existing working groups. As I said that these working groups were formed somewhere in 2017 or '18, right? And now, whether they have relevance or not, whether they can merge together, or can we have some additional working group as per the need of the day? So all these things put together will define the leadership position, whether it is required to be a position where only a single person can hold one

position or multiple positions. And your suggestion is quite correct that you carry the experience of the working group to the leadership. And this will help in the decision making also.

The second suggestion which you have given is really fantastic. And thank you very much for giving that suggestion that the leadership should be staggering in nature and it should not happen that the entire leadership change in one shot. And we will definitely take care of that when we will be seeing. Thank you very much. Any other suggestions, Seda? Or any question?

SEDA AKBULUT:

Yes, there is one hand from the Zoom room. Meikal Mumin, could you please unmute yourself and share your question or comment?

MEIKAL MUMIN:

Yes, thank you. I had a question. I also copied it to the meeting chat in case you want to read on and it is better understandable this way. So, I am a former member of ICANN's Arabic GP and Latin GP and TF-AIDN. I have a general question on USAG plans regarding outreach. So, my question is what kind of outreach at government level has USAG considered so far? For example, if you think about United Nations Sustainable Development Goals such as number 10, they address inequality within and among countries. In particular, some countries have laws on accessibility. So, universal acceptance could be argued to tie into that since, for example, freedom of expression should include not being forced to fall back to ASCII repertoire when identifying natural or legal persons as well as natural institutions. So, are there

opportunities to cooperate with such stakeholders? I hypothesize if an international political institution such as United Nations would create, for example, initiatives to allow international users to create free emails using local script. This could inform users of, first of all, the technical opportunity to create local script email addresses, addressees which they are, I think, often not aware of, as well as create incentives for other vendors to enable interoperability. And such initially fragmented email services are not without precedent, such as De-Mail in Germany, which is a mail service created exclusively for in-group email communication between citizens and government offices. So, even though it would fracture the Internet, in some sense it would also introduce the concept to a very large user group in one step.

So, maybe there are opportunities to inspire programs to raise pickup and awareness and cooperation in national and international governing organizations and institutions. And this, I think, would address the "egg" part which Mark Svancarek has also mentioned. Thank you. I hope this was understandable.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you, Meikal, and very nice question. Thank you very much for the question. And as I said that in the Five-Year Strategic Plan, approaching government, engaging government is the top priority which UASG is working on it. And we personally feel that they are the biggest influencer in adoption of UA, specifically if you see the ccNSO. Most of the ccTLDs are managed or influenced by the governments at large. So, the scope within which we would like to go is that I just want to remind you that there is a group in ICANN Org which is specifically looking at

the government engagement and government approachment. All those aspects which you have discussed in your question, which include approaching the United Nations and related agencies, for example, IGF or ITU, or maybe the other organizations which have direct influence on the government, is undertaken by that group of ICANN.org. Then ICANN has a specialized group, which is called Government Advisory Council, where we have, to my understanding, more than 250 countries which are representing various governments across the globe.

So, we are now trying to take a collective approach to the government, collective means the UASG representative, the ICANN.org representative who takes care of the government engagements, and the GAC member. If the GAC member is part of this government engagement, then definitely they not only facilitate a movement of ICANN to the government, but they also help us to implement those guidelines and suggestions from ICANN for implementation of UA related activities and plans. So, to cut short the answer, we are only saying that on a limited way we are moving together, and we hope that in case there are some changes required for this approach, maybe after six months or so, looking at the results, UASG would like to make corrective actions at that particular time. I hope I am able to answer your question, Meikal. Thank you. Okay, thank you, Anil and Meikal.

NABIL BENAMAR:

I just would like to thank Meikal for his intervention. I would like to remind the audience participants and attendees that Meikal Mumin is one of the members of the Task Force for the Arabic Script IDNs that have been able to develop the whole label generation rules for the

Arabic script that was implemented back in 2015 in the root zone. Thank you, Mumin. Thank you, Meikal, for joining us. Always a pleasure. Thank you.

SEDA AKBULUT:

Yes, we have some questions and comments in the Q&A, so I will start from the beginning. This is from Dr. Marc Miller. Anil, who sees UASG as having a governance issue that must be addressed first rather than prioritizing the more important work in UASG that leadership and staff failed to do, such as updating the UASG charter documents, working groups, and other important UASG documents, among other things, which caused this governance conflict? Is the steering group failing to supervise what staff is doing? And if so, why has ICANN not been told and no remedial action has been taken by the steering group leader, ICANN, against such staff members for this negligence? Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Thank you very much, Dr. Marc Miller, for this question. Let me inform you that the SOI issue we started discussing in the month of October. We carried out and when a community meets, there are agreements, disagreements, differences on the opinion also. But I am very happy to inform you that the entire community, including the UASG coordination working group and admin working group, has agreed and approved the implementation of SOI. And as I said that we are at the stage of implementation and we hope that you will see the announcement from ICANN staff in next one week or two weeks. So there is no disagreement at this moment on the SOI implementation.

Similarly, the process which we are going to follow for other aspect which Dr. Nabil has discussed with all of us is that once we will discuss internally, get the approval of the leadership at the UASG coordination working group and UASG admin working group, and then we will come to community for their input feedback. We take the community feedback and inputs very seriously. Again, we will go back on the desk, we will discuss with the coordination working group and admin working group, adopt all the suggestions which are implementable in the process, and then only we will send it to ICANN for their acceptance and publish. So everything, as I said, the initial objective is transparency and accountability and the process has to be open. And that is what we are going to follow in making any change on the governance. This is number one.

Number two, governance is a process which is a continuous process, whether it is a community-based organization like ICANN or it is a commercial organization like companies. So governance is being discussed and required to be reviewed on a periodic basis. I hope I am able to answer your query, Dr. Marc Miller. Thank you. Any other comment?

SEDA AKBULUT:

There is one hand from the room. Please introduce yourself first.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE:

Thank you. My name is Abdulkarim. I had to step out to take pictures, so probably I must have missed some things. When I am looking at the timeline, it says ICANN will process the SOI. What do you mean by ICANN

processing the SOI? Because I think SOI is individual that understands what the SOI is. So what processing are we talking about here? That is the first one.

Then the other one is I don't know if the issue of holding multiple positions were discussed earlier. Okay. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN:

Let me answer this question that once a group like UASG has recommended that SOI is required to be published, ICANN staff is required to design the format in which the information is required to be collected. Once the format is designed, then it will be open to the community for filling up those information which is required in the SOI form. It will be collected by the ICANN staff and looking at it and then giving the final acceptance to those SOI contents. Sometimes it happens that the contents which are provided by the applicant may be incorrect. In that case, ICANN staff again advises them to correct it and then submit to us. So involvement of ICANN staff is there. As I said, ICANN staff is working for the last almost six to eight weeks working on the SOI format and they are now virtually ready. We hope that the announcement of implementation of SOI may come any day now. Thank you. Any other comment? Any other hand?

SEDA AKBULUT:

There is no hand but there are some questions in the chat. Yeah, please.

SEDA AKBULUT: Okay, this is from [Novek Govandan.] Does the UASG have a separate governance structure or does it inherit ICANN governance? Can you share what additional UASG governance initiatives are currently underway?

ANIL JAIN: Thank you for this question. So UASG has its own governance which I hope in 2015 when UASG was formed is driven from the ICANN governance procedure itself. As during the presentation, we informed the community that there is a top leadership where the UASG chair along with three vice chairs are there which manage the functioning of the entire UASG. UASG works with various working groups and two community groups. The working groups have members which are driven from the UASG community with the interest which is specific to that particular working group is admitted in the various working groups. For example, tech working group, measurement working group, EAI working group and communication working group.

We also have two groups which are working on local initiatives which work at the national level and at the regional level. We have right now five local initiatives which are working on the ground. And second is we also have the UA Ambassador Program. We have right now 15 UA ambassadors representing around 10 countries. They go to the field, they undertake the UA information spreading and then they also help and reach out to technical communities, government communities, civil people who actually work on this. So the total governance is like this and that existing governance is available on uasg.tech. You are requested to kindly go through the uasg.tech. And this complete

discussion today is recorded and will be available for all the community members to access it and use it. And whatever is on the table is also discussed today. I hope this makes the things quite clear to you.

And the next thing is as it is seen that we are going to have the UA Day discussion tomorrow at 9:00 as per the local time. And I request all of you to join the discussion, get more information and if we can get more feedback and suggestions from you, that would be wonderful. Any other questions?

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE:

Sorry, one quick one. Why do we want to remove people that do not submit their SOIs? Probably I missed something, but why are we removing them from the mailing list? If you do not submit your SOI, I understand if you say you cannot take up leadership position, but why are you removing them?

ANIL JAIN:

Let me inform you again. So our intention is not to remove anybody. The process is like this. Since we have to introduce SOI, first of all the existing community volunteers have to undertake the SOI to influence and to motivate also the new entrants who are coming to the SOI. Now we will give sufficient time, two to three months to the existing members to fill up their SOI and submit. And during this two to three months, there will be multiple appeals to all of them to do it. But at the same time, suppose an example is there which I have informed during the process also, I fail to submit the SOI. So I lose that membership of SOI at that particular time. Let us say today is 5th of March, but on 6th

of March I can apply again to UASG with the SOI and you become again the member of the SOI. So definitely as it is seen in other ACs and SOs of ICANN, the first who apply for SOI is the leaders. Whether it is ccNSO, GNSO, ALAC or anybody. First of all we request and we desire that the leaders should apply for SOI. And I don't think that there will be any situation when existing members will lose their membership or their leadership.

NABIL BENAMAR: Abdulkarim, let me just add something here. SOI is not only about leadership, but for all members. So to become a UASG member, to become in the discuss list, you need to show your SOI so we know who is commenting, who is voting also. So it has a huge impact in the whole process. Thank you.

ANIL JAIN: Thank you very much for participation, for asking questions, giving us feedback and suggestions, which will definitely improve the entire working of UASG and including the 5-year strategic plan. Now I am submitting back to Seda.

SEDA AKBULUT: Thank you, Anil, and everyone for your active participation. And today we may not be able to respond to all the questions. Please feel free to email to info@uasg.tech for the questions that we could not answer today. Have a nice day.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]