
ICANN79 | CF – Welcome Ceremony & Community Excellence Award
Monday, March 4, 2024 – 9:00 to 10:00 SJU

NAELA SARRAS:

Hello and welcome to San Juan, Puerto Rico. President of the Senate, Senior Dalmau. Senator Senior Vargas Vidots. Auxiliary Secretary of the State Department, Senior [Amatos.] City Manager of San Juan, Senior [Alisea.] CEO and President of Punto PR, Senior Moreno. Esteemed guests and excellencies, thank you for being here. Welcome to ICANN 79, the ICANN Community Forum in Puerto Rico.

I am thrilled to be here with you all. The last time we were here was for ICANN 61 in March 2018. And before that, we were here in Puerto Rico for ICANN 29 all the way back in June 2007. So thank you, Puerto Rico, for continuing to host us and make us feel welcome. This week, we are all orgullosamente Boricua. Gracias.

It is my privilege to welcome you all to the first public meeting of the year, known as the Community Forum, and to take this opportunity to briefly reflect on the growth of this community. As I look around this room, I cannot help but be reminded of the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "We but mirror the world." Gandhi's words are just to embody the values and principles we wish to see in the world. And this could not be more true when observing the growth of this community over the years. The tapestry of the people in this room fill me with hope, together with the countless volunteers around the world. This community works hard to build a more inclusive internet for everyone. It's not easy work, and we don't always agree with each other. But we continue to work hard

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

today to make a better tomorrow. We work together to be the future we want to see.

And speaking of a better tomorrow, I want to welcome a very special group of future ICANNers with us today. Somewhere in this room, I believe to this side, we have 50 high school students and teachers from the Gerardo Césola School right here in Puerto Rico. Thank you. It's great to have you here.

I would also like to extend a special welcome to all those who are attending an ICANN meeting for the first time in this meeting, and to the NextGen and Fellowship Programs participants. They all have special badges, special ribbons on their badges showing that they are participating in the newcomer programs. Please take a few moments in your sessions to welcome them and help them feel included.

For those attending the meeting remotely, ICANN strives to provide robust virtual participation tools for all public sessions to facilitate participation from around the world. We hope you take advantage of those opportunities, and we look forward to seeing you in the different sessions taking place this week. And with that, please let me introduce the chair of the ICANN board, Tripti Sinha, for her opening remarks. [

TRIPTI SINHA:

Thank you, Naela. Buenos días, Puerto Rico. Good morning, Puerto Rico. And welcome to the ICANN 79 Community Forum. It is truly an honor to stand before you today here in the beautiful city of San Juan. On behalf of ICANN, I would like to thank our generous sponsors and hosts. I would also like to express my gratitude for the warm reception

we have received. The last time ICANN held an in-person meeting here was in March of 2018, not long after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. The resilience of the people of San Juan is remarkable. I am heartened to see that the city has been rebuilt and is even more vibrant than before. We are honored here to be joined by dignitaries from the Senate, government and academia representatives, the CEO and president of .PR, esteemed guests, and the internet community. Whether you are here today in person or joining us online, your presence underscores the strength of our shared commitment to the future of ICANN and to ensuring a secure, stable, and unified global internet.

As we embark on the first ICANN public meeting of 2024, I want to first reflect a bit on last year, which was defined by changes and major milestones for ICANN. 2023 began with the appointment of a new interim president and CEO, and September marked ICANN's 25th anniversary, which we celebrated together at the annual general meeting in October. Throughout the year, we navigated the dynamic and complex digital landscape to fulfill our mission. Perhaps the most significant development for ICANN last year began when the board formally initiated the process to open the next round of new generic top-level domain applications. Months of collaboration ensued involving the community, organization, and board, resulting in significant progress towards the launch of the next round in April 2026. This ambitious endeavor underscores our commitment to expanding the domain name system with inclusivity in mind.

Over the past year, the ICANN board continued to build on our commitment to strengthen collaboration with our internet ecosystem

partners, particularly with the numbers community. These collective efforts and problem solving have resulted in measurable progress towards our common goals. Members of Org and the board now have regularly scheduled meetings with our RIR colleagues. Also, this past January, we met with the board of the Latin American and Caribbean Internet Addresses Registry to leverage our synergies and strengthen our partnership with the five RIRs.

On behalf of the board, I would like to thank each of you for your tireless efforts to achieve our shared goals and fulfill our mission in the past year. Your commitment to collegiality, compromise, and creating a safe and inclusive environment is truly commendable. At the start of another transformative year for ICANN, I can see that we are united in our belief in a unified global internet.

Last year marked another major milestone for ICANN. For only the third time in the organization's history, the board took the first crucial steps in the development of ICANN's strategic plan for fiscal years 2026 through 2030. The strategic plan serves as a roadmap for the next five years and consists of specific, tangible objectives that will enable us to continue to fulfill our mission while striving towards our collective vision for the future. In other words, the strategic plan is the foundation for everything we do.

However, charting a course for the next five years is not for the board to undertake alone. It is a collective effort that must involve all of ICANN-- the board, the community, and the organization. Your unique insights are essential for developing strategies that will help ICANN anticipate

challenges and seize opportunities in a rapidly evolving internet landscape.

Many of you are already actively involved in the strategic planning process, which is still in its early stages. As the process advances, I encourage all of you to review what we have done so far and to contribute your ideas and feedback. In particular, I urge you to participate in the strategic planning session that is happening on Wednesday.

The board is working to fulfill its critical responsibility of selecting ICANN's next president and CEO. Last year, we held listening sessions with stakeholders from across ICANN and the internet ecosystem, whose input helped shape the candidate profile and position description.

I mentioned a year ago that ICANN is at an inflection point and faces a gamut of challenges. In the next president and CEO, we are looking for an individual with transformational leadership who inspires action to effectively and relentlessly execute on multiple fronts and will modernize the organization and its processes, implement policies successfully and in a timely manner, build even stronger partnerships within the ecosystem, reshape ICANN to be an exemplar multistakeholder model, and work effectively on the global stage with other world leaders in this critical space to reaffirm an inclusive multistakeholder internet governance paradigm.

The search process is ongoing but well advanced. It has yielded an experienced and diverse candidate pool from across the globe. The board is diligently working towards identifying the individual who has

the right temperament and balance of personal, management, and technical skills to lead ICANN during these exceptional times and into the next chapter of its journey.

Indeed, we achieved much in the past year with the culmination of many areas of work. However, there is no time for rest. We face numerous challenges ahead and we must remain at the ready. Sustaining a commitment to timely project delivery is crucial. And recognizing the efficacy of collective effort will propel us further and faster.

As we navigate to pursue our goals and navigate our own challenges, we must also recognize the mounting pressures on the multistakeholder model of internet governance. This model, driven by collaboration and shared responsibility, has produced a consistently stable and functioning domain name system for over 40 years, amid exponential growth in internet traffic and users.

Multistakeholder governance has allowed the internet and the digital economy and services to flourish while protecting it against unilateral decision making and top-down control. This model empowers participants from all sectors to come together as equals to share their views and work towards consensus-based decisions. This broad inclusivity and democratic participation has yielded a system of voluntary standards, best practices, cooperation, and trust.

In 2005, the international community, including all governments, accepted the multistakeholder model of internet governance during the World Summit on the Information Society. They recognized the vital roles of all parties in maintaining and evolving the internet as a global

resource. Next year, the United Nations will review the WSIS outcomes, and the UN General Assembly will have the opportunity to reaffirm and improve on the achievements of the WSIS. The discussions have already begun amid the consideration of a proposed global digital compact, which is expected to be adopted at the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024.

At this watershed moment for multistakeholder internet governance, ICANN, along with our technical partners, must showcase the strengths of this multistakeholder model and contribute our insights to the broader global conversation about the internet's role in shaping a sustainable and inclusive future.

As we embark on this new year, we must continue to be bold, resilient, and agile. We must continue to challenge ourselves, to take a hard look at our processes, and to experiment with new ideas and approaches. It is only through evolution that we can continue to deliver the most impactful outcomes expediently, yet without sacrificing quality. We are strongest when we work as one, and together we can overcome any obstacle we find in our way.

The current times are complicated. The global geopolitical landscape is fraught with aggression. As is typical with such situations, unthinkable collateral damage is done to innocent and good people from different walks of life, from different fates, and from different ideologies. Emotions and sensitivities are high. I urge all participants, whether you are here in person or online, to focus on the work that needs to be done here at ICANN 79. Please rise above the fray and reach out to each other in good faith and on the grounds of our common humanity. I implore

you to take the high road and think before you say or do something that could be potentially hurtful to someone. We are here to further the mission of ICANN, and I ask that we immerse ourselves in the work and spirit of that mission.

At this community forum, the board is looking forward to the discussions, collaboration, and insights that will unfold over the next few days. The internet's identifier systems continue to evolve, and ICANN remains committed to promoting a unified and reliable internet within a sound framework of global multi-stakeholder governance. Only the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance will allow us to continue to meet the needs of internet users, including those who are online today, as well as the next few billions who are not yet connected.

Your dedication to our mission serves as a powerful reminder that, together, we can build a future where the internet remains a force for good. On behalf of the ICANN board, thank you for your hard work and commitment. I wish you a successful meeting, and enjoy Puerto Rico. [inaudible] to introduce Sally Costerton, ICANN's interim president and CEO. Thank you.

SALLY COSTERTON:

Thank you. Thank you, Tripti. Good morning, everyone. We are thrilled to be here in San Juan ICANN 79 Community Forum. It is wonderful to be back in San Juan. And I would like to thank, along with Tripti, our generous sponsors and hosts who once again welcome us to this wonderful place.

I was here at our last meeting, and I have very happy memories of it. Particularly, I remember, despite the fact that we had only just recovered-- you had only just recovered from Hurricane Maria, we were sharing this beautiful venue with a rather wonderful chocolate convention, which made arriving in the morning even more interesting. But despite the damage you had suffered, which was extreme, you welcomed us so warmly. We had a wonderful meeting, and you have done so much since then, all these beautiful new buildings. It's quite extraordinary. And I also wanted to join in Naela's thanks to our wider-- and Tripti's-- to our wider community participants in Puerto Rico. You have stood by our side, and we cannot thank you enough for what you do now and you will do tomorrow.

And on that point, as Naela said, I'm pleased to say that this week we're getting to know the next generation of Puerto Rico ICANNers. In partnership with EDP University and DOT PR, we have just completed a two-day event for about 60 local high school students interested in a career in technology here in San Juan. The students learned about ICANN, the domain name system, how the internet infrastructure is built and run, and how roots are configured. Each student had a chance to configure an ISP in a virtual lab during the hands-on portion of the training. So you have all of that to look forward to.

I've been at ICANN more than a decade, and I really thought I understood our mission, what we do, why we do it, how we do it, and importantly, who we do it for. But during this past year, when I have also had the privilege of serving as ICANN's interim president and CEO, I have come to truly appreciate the power of what ICANN's mission can do. We're made up of people from different sectors, different cultures,

different generations, and different opinions. We may, and sometimes do, disagree about a lot of things. But the mission is the reason everybody in this room, everybody in our community is here today.

Our mission is not merely a statement. It is a guiding force that transcends disagreement and unites us in a shared purpose. I believe it's our superpower. And I've been amazed at what we can achieve by harnessing that power. We are guided by our shared belief in the criticality of one global internet. And despite all the facts and figures and data that we use, in the end, we make decisions based on that belief.

Our shared belief in that mission takes us through while we are struggling to reach consensus. And it's what brings us together. We don't always know how to explain it. But I see it every day with individual staff, community members, amongst the board, in working groups and meetings. I recognize it when I hear the phrase, we must do the right thing. This superpower is what has allowed ICANN to succeed and thrive through the past 25 years. Even though, as Tripti said, the environment around us is constantly changing, we have used that to preserve the essence of ICANN to continue to fulfill our mission. It gives us focus and purpose.

However, it can be a double-edged sword. Our unwavering commitment to our mission is a source of strength, but it can make it hard to take risks, to innovate. It often feels safer to stick to what we know, to stay inside our tried and tested rules and protocols. But the world is rapidly changing and the internet is both causing that change and being affected by it. So we must constantly challenge ourselves.

How can we stay true to our core principles and continue to keep the internet sustainable, safe and secure, whilst navigating the distracting whirl of global challenges?

As Tripti said, it can feel intimidating. But I believe we are stronger than we have ever been and we are more than ready. We're a rapidly maturing organization and I know from talking to you that you are as excited and as hopeful as I am that we are strengthening that superpower by experimenting with new ideas to find new solutions. We're getting much better at trusting each other to take more risks, to allow us to address issues effectively.

When we last met in Hamburg, I talked about trust and the critical role it plays in our work. And as I said, we trust each other to prioritize our mission. We trust the processes we have created and the multi-stakeholder model we have built. And we're using that to tackle these tough challenges, such as DNS abuse. The determination to find solutions is what brought the contracted parties house and ICANN staff to the negotiating table last year. Together, they devised amendments to the registry and registrar agreements to combat DNS abuse. These received overwhelming support from the contracted parties, have been approved by the board and are now going into implementation, marking a major victory in the fight against DNS abuse.

And digital inclusion. The world is united in the recognition that we must all do our part to bring the two and a half billion people in the world who are not on the internet online. Many are blocked because they use non-Latin scripts and languages. Our commitment to do our part created the close collaboration between the ICANN community,

the board and the staff to do the hard work to get us to the launch of the next round of new gTLDs. And I hope everyone here will attend the next round community consultation session in this room right after this session.

But if email and technology platforms can't accept those scripts, we're limiting progress. And the ongoing universal acceptance program with its focus on creating a more multilingual and accessible internet reflects the changing needs of internet users and ICANN's commitment to the global public interest. The inaugural UA Day last year marked the first time a diverse set of technical and language communities, companies, governments and DNS industry stakeholders mobilized across the world to champion UA and the pursuit of a multilingual internet on a global scale. Building on this success since we last met, we have been busy with the community organizing this year's UA Day, which will take place at the end of March. Do please attend the working session on Wednesday. And I want to take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of community members around the world who have supported this work.

Now, many of those two and a half billion are in Africa. Africans are coming online fast, but there is still a gap. ICANN's community in Africa has been active, of course, for many years, and I'm pleased to say we have many of our African stakeholders with us here online and with us in Puerto Rico. But we wanted to do more to use our convening power to embrace other organizations who are also trying to support internet expansion in Africa. So in 2022, we created the Coalition for Digital Africa. We invited partners with existing capacity-building programs to work with us and each other to make more of our collective resources.

It was a brand-new idea for ICANN, and honestly, it was a bit of a risk. We didn't really know how many other organizations would be interested, but it's been more successful than I could have imagined, with activities now in 26 African countries. And I've just come from the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, where we met with many African stakeholders and IGOs, and I'm happy to say they are all focused on speeding up digital inclusion with a common focus on scripts and languages as a key enabler and strengthening all our efforts to build skills and knowledge, including with our ccTLD partners to open up the internet to a new generation of users.

A different kind of challenge has been addressing WHOIS data. After years of work, the community agreed we needed to find a way to address accessing WHOIS data and experiment with a simpler system to see what works. After thousands of hours of work, we concluded the only way we could do this was to find out more about the demand for the data, from whom and for what. So we agreed on an experiment that we would put all our efforts for two years into trying to build that picture.

The Registration Data Request Service, which was publicly launched in November, is another example of a creative solution, something new, balancing the need for access to registration data with the imperative to protect privacy and security. It's an innovative and brave approach, and like many new ideas, it's not always easy to explain to everyone, but we've given each other so much support and we're making excellent progress. And I want to thank everyone who has taken part and encourage others to participate with us in this important experiment.

Launching the grant program posed a completely different kind of challenge. Recently launched, this program will allocate millions of dollars to support projects aimed at fostering a unified, open, and globally interoperable internet. Applications for the first \$10 million of grants will be accepted in a two-month window from March the 25th, 2024, and we will have sessions on that at this meeting.

As Tripti mentioned, internet governance and digital cooperation are the topic of many important discussions that are happening as we speak. To prepare for these processes, including the upcoming WSIS review, we have developed a strategy to identify and mitigate any issues that have the potential to impact our mission, to raise awareness of our work, and to maintain the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance and the role of the technical community. We look forward to sharing that strategy and how you can get involved at the geopolitical, legislative, and regulatory development update session on Thursday.

Before I conclude, I'd like to acknowledge the dedication of the entire organization's staff. ICANN is built on the passion and commitment of individuals who work tirelessly to uphold our mission. And in particular, I would like to thank David Olive, our head of policy support. As most of you already know, after 14 years of tireless service to ICANN, David is retiring at the end of May, and so this will be his last ICANN meeting. I know so many of you have benefited from his expertise, advice, and support over the years, and his finest legacy to ICANN is his team, who embodies so many of the skills he has to continue to help the community to deliver ICANN's mission. Please join me in thanking David for his work for ICANN. Thank you so much, David.

The year ahead will be characterized by further evolution and change, yet our commitment to our mission, our trust in one another, and the spirit of collaboration that defines us will remain steadfast. We are stronger together. Thank you. And now I am delighted to introduce Oscar Moreno, president and CEO of DotPR.

OSCAR MORENO:

Distinguished guests, esteemed delegates, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 79th public meeting of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, right here in the vibrant city of San Juan, Puerto Rico. It is with great honor and immense pleasure that we extend our warmest greetings to each and every one of you gathered here today.

As host of this prestigious event, I stand before you with a profound sense of pride and excitement. For us here in Puerto Rico, this gathering represents not only an opportunity to showcase our beautiful island, but also to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity that lie at the heart of ICANN's mission.

San Juan, with its rich tapestry, storied history, and breathtaking landscapes serves as the perfect backdrop for this momentous occasion. From the cobblestone streets of Old San Juan to the lush rainforest of El Yunque, from the vibrant colors of our local cuisine to the infectious rhythms of salsa music, our city offers a unique blend of tradition and modernity that mirrors the dynamic of the internet itself.

Over the next few days, as we come together to discuss and deliberate on the future of the internet, I invite you to immerse yourself in

everything that San Juan has to offer, from our world-class hospitality to our unparalleled natural beauty. But more importantly, I urge you to engage with our local community, to learn from our experiences, and to embrace the spirit of collaboration and solidarity that defines Puerto Rican culture.

As we embark on this journey together, let us not forget the profound impact that the internet has had on our lives and societies. It has revolutionized the way we communicate, conduct business, and share knowledge, breaking down barriers, bringing us closer together in ways that one would have thought unthinkable.

But with this remarkable progress also comes a great responsibility, a responsibility to ensure that the internet remains a force of good, accessible to all, guided by the principles of openness, transparency, and inclusivity. In San Juan, we are no strangers to the power of resilience and community. In the wake of natural disasters, such as Hurricane Maria, our people have demonstrated time and time again their unwavering strength and determination to rebuild and thrive. It is the same spirit of resilience and solidarity that we bring to our role as hosts of the 79th ICANN public meeting. As we work together to address the challenges and opportunity that lie ahead in shaping the future of the internet.

Over the course of this meeting, I encourage every one of you to engage in meaningful dialogue, to share your insights and expertise and to collaborate towards finding innovative solutions to the complex issues facing the internet ecosystem. Together, we have the power to make a

difference, to shape a future where the internet remains a catalyst for positive change and social progress.

In closing, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for joining us here today. Your presence and participation are a testament to the importance of the work that we do and the shared values that unite us. Together, let us seize this opportunity to make a lasting impact and to build together a brighter future for generations to come. Thank you all and welcome to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

NAELA SARRAS:

Thank you, Senor Moreno. And now let me introduce Senor [Alisea,] City Manager of San Juan.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Good morning. Moreno has already said most of what I intended to say. Thank you for advancing part of what I was gonna say. I was gonna say basically, welcome to San Juan, Puerto Rico. The chairman and the other speakers this morning have talked about the history of the meetings that I can have had here in San Juan. And I saw that the first meeting was in 2007, then the second was in 2016. And now the third meeting in 2024. So you've been shortening your visits to Puerto Rico and we are very happy. They told us that they want to start coming yearly or something like that. So you're all welcome.

And as we gather here in San Juan, it is my honor to extend a warm welcome on behalf of Mayor Miguel Romero. San Juan is a city that stands as a testament to over 500 years of history. It is a fitting backdrop for this gathering which aims to shape the future of internet governance

and digital communication. This city with its blend of historic charm and modern vitality has always been at the crossroads of culture and innovation.

This forum is hosted in a locale integral to the history of communications highlighted by the strategic significance of Puerto Rico following its 1493 discovery. This role fostered vital links for information flow between Europe and the Americas. Fast forward to 1859 and we find another landmark event in the history of communications technology right here in Puerto Rico.

It happened that two gentlemen had just finalized a trip in a carriage pulled by a pair of black horses. When the horses were being led to the stables, they ran off. One of the gentlemen was none other than Samuel Morse who was spending some time in Puerto Rico and was setting up the first telegraph line in the west side of the island.

In an urgent bid to capture those horses, Morse composed a telegraph message that said, horses escaped from here are going in that direction. Stop them. This message, practical in its immediacy, became the first of its kind in Puerto Rico demonstrating the transformative power of telecommunications in everyday life. This story, while seemingly simple, encapsulates the essence of innovation, the ability to leverage new technologies in the face of challenges, a principle that continues to guide the discussions here at ICANN.

As you deliberate on the future of internet, please be inspired by the spirit of Morse and the historic city of San Juan. I bid you to proceed with the same determination and ingenuity that has characterized human communications from the days of the telegraph to the digital

age. Welcome once again to San Juan. May your time here be productive, inspiring, and as memorable as the rich history and vibrant culture that surrounds us. Thank you for your dedication to shaping the future where technology continues to bring us closer, just as it did when Morse's message successfully reunited those runaway horses with their carriage. So thank you and have a nice meeting.

NAELA SARRAS: Thank you, Senor Alisea. And thank you for having us in your beautiful city. Let me now introduce Senor [Amatos,] Auxiliary Secretary of the State Department for her welcome remarks.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, good morning to all. I don't have anything in writing, so welcome and enjoy your meeting. Thank you for being here. (audience applauding)

NAELA SARRAS: Thank you, Senor [Amatos.] And now it is my pleasure to invite the award selection panel to come up to the stage to deliver the Community Excellence Award. Please.

EDUARDO DIAZ: Hello, everyone. Welcome to Puerto Rico. This beautiful island. My name is Eduardo Diaz, and I'm honored to speak on behalf of the selection panel for the ICANN Community Excellence Award in 2024. This year marks the 10th edition of this significant award that started back then in 2014. We usually present the award during ICANN Policy

Forum meetings in June, but today we make history by honoring a distinguished member of our community here in our welcome ceremony at the ICANN Community Forum.

This award recognizes those who work with dedication and in a collegial manner in order to find consensus solutions against the backdrop of our unique internet governance model. We have an amazing selection panel made up of members of the ICANN Community from all over the world. I want to especially thank you, dear panelists, for your dedication this year.

After holding many meetings and deep and thorough analysis of all the candidates, we finally found our awardee for 2024. I want to highlight her dedication to ICANN, her commitment, her constructive approach, and her collegial manner when working in the community. The awardee also respects cultural diversity and does their best to welcome everyone in the community. This is inspiring. This person has led significant debates and has fairly led conversations and participation, and she, and this person, has been amazing in leading discussions to advance our work. This person leaves a mark in our track record by showing an unwavering commitment to our multi-stakeholder model.

So with that, it is an honor to announce the ICANN Community Excellence Award 2024. Please join me in a round of applause and stand up to celebrate Manal Ismail. Congratulations, Manal, and thank you.

MANAL ISMAIL:

So I'm already overwhelmed. So thank you, thank you very much, and good morning, everyone, and a very good day to those who are online.

I'm speechless. I'm really humbled by this valuable award and honored to join the list of distinguished past recipients. Looks like Puerto Rico is going to be my lucky place, so more than happy to come every year.

So Puerto Rico has witnessed my very first meeting as Chair of the Governmental Advisory Committee in 2018, and now with this invaluable award today. I'm very grateful to colleagues who have graciously nominated me. And very thankful to the selection panel who have considered my nomination. I've been on the selection panel once, and I know how a tough job it is to select the recipients of this award.

I would also like to thank you all for your overwhelming support. Without your cooperation, your flexibility, and your willingness to find a middle ground, we would have never been able to reach consensus on any of the topics we've been discussing. So this award is very well deserved by each and every one of ICANN's unique community. I'm very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with you all within the Governmental Advisory Committee, but also with ICANN's fellow SOs and ACs, hardworking board, and tireless staff. A fantastically diverse number of colleagues, mentors, and friends, all equally enthusiastic about the success of ICANN multi-stakeholder model.

ICANN was among the very first tasks I was assigned after graduation. I've been participating to ICANN for more than 20 years now. And ever since I started to participate to ICANN, I have never been able to stop. Partially, I would say because I was lucky enough to stay in charge of this [inaudible] despite changing jobs. But most importantly, because I believe I've become an addict. And this is really easy to tell. It has symptoms. For example, looking for transcripts whenever I can't hear

someone, no matter where I am. Expecting real-time interpretation in the six UN languages plus Portuguese at any gathering, and many more.

It was a very long journey, but an extremely rewarding one at all levels, professionally and personally. Getting to participate to significant milestones, such as the introduction of IDNs, the IANA transition, and the introduction of new gTLDs. But also getting to know you all, learn from you all, and make friends at every corner of the world.

And before concluding, I would like also to thank my family and work colleagues who have always had my back throughout the past years. So I look forward to continuing to work with each and every one of you, ensuring that ICANN multi-stakeholder model continues to evolve and to deliver effectively and efficiently. Thank you.

NAELA SARRAS:

Manal, and thank you for your significant contributions to the multi-stakeholder model. And now, I think a much awaited part of the welcome ceremony. I am happy to welcome Cultura Activa P.R. to give us the cultural performance. Cultura Activa P.R. is a Puerto Rican not-for-profit foundation focusing on using arts, recreation, education, and culture as a means for social change. Enjoy the show.

Thank you, Cultura Activa P.R. I hope everyone enjoyed the performance. Before we leave, I'll highlight a few things. First, I want to recognize the presence of the Colegio San Gabriel for Deaf Children and members of the deaf community who are with us today in this welcome ceremony.

A few announcements for today. We have the welcome reception tonight, this evening, hosted by the Puerto Rican Tourism Company. This will be happening at their building, the Arcada, in beautiful downtown San Juan, and it's a beautiful venue, so you will want to go there. Right after this session, there will be an email that comes to all the participants with logistics of how to get there. Please remember that you will need your badge to go into the venue.

One session I want to highlight for today is the Q&A, or question and answer session, with the ICANN executive team. This is usually a dynamic dialogue with the community with many questions and topics of interest. The session happens in this same room at 1:15 Pm, ballroom A.

With that, thank you all very much. This concludes today's welcome ceremony for ICANN 79. I wish you all a successful meeting. Gracias.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]