ICANN79 | CF – ccNSO: DNS Abuse Standing Committee Community Update
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CLAUDIA RUIZ: Hello and welcome to the ccNSO DNS Abuse Standing Committee Community Update. My name is Claudia Ruiz, and I along with my colleague Kimberly Carlson are the remote participation managers for this session.

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Thank you, and with that, I will now hand the floor over the Nick Wenban-Smith.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thank you very much, Clauda, and welcome, everybody. I think it was George Orwell who put all of the terrible things you're scared of into Room 101, but here we are in Room 101 in the ground floor of the convention center in Puerto Rico. So welcome, everybody. And welcome to our online participants. I don't know how many people we've got online but if, staff, you could keep an eye on any chat or any questions that we could help with, engagement is very important for us to be able to engage virtually as well as having the blessing of being here in person in Puerto Rico.

So for the record, this is a working session of the ccNSO DNS Abuse Standing Committee, the DASC. The agenda is up on the screen. I won't waste everybody's time by reading it. So welcome, Agenda Point 1.

In terms of the administrative updates, there's a) statements of interest and b) action items, the circulation of the survey to the full working group which I think I've seen done. Were there any SOI updates or any other matters that we needed to cover in the administrative matters? If there are none, I will hand over to David to talk to us a little bit about the repository, the library of resources for ccTLDs in relation to abuse materials and the email list for notifications. Thanks, David.

DAVID MCAULEY: Thank you, Nick. Hello, everybody. My name is David McAuley. I'm an employee of Verisign, and we participate in the ccNSO by virtue of our management of the .cc country code top-level domain. My comments here today are personal comments and made in my capacity as the leader of the DASC's subgroup that's known as the repository subgroup.

Basically, we have put together the tools of a repository of information, useful links, etc., and an email list that should be good tools for ccTLD managers to come to grips with to address DNS abuse when and as they see it.

And so Kim is going to be putting the slides up here with respect to the repository structure. What we're looking for is useful information along the lines of these four sub bullets that you see up here. Anything really that's of interest with respect to coming to grips with DNS abuse. It could be conceptual. It could be data. It could be reports, even opinions. It doesn't matter. But it will be along there. You can use the URL code.

And what we are looking for is for people to submit these kinds of links to us. And then what we will do, that is the subgroup, there are six of us. We are basically what we've loosely called the editorial board. We will take a look at these links and we will make sure that they're appointment, that they're appropriate, responsive to the needs of ccNSO and ccTLD managers. And then we will put into the repository those that we feel are useful. Over the course of time we will also remove things that have become outdated and put them in an archive.

Kim, if you could show the steps to submit something for the repository. We welcome input, suggestions from anyone. However, if someone doesn't want to send it to the repository list, they're certainly welcome to send it to myself or other members of the subgroup and we would be happy to submit these.

We have a couple of good items pending that I will go ahead and submit. We have some people who have been—Rowena I saw enter the room

from PIR—who submit things to us over time that are quite useful. We will put those up and get them running.

As I said, we have an editorial board. This group is, by the way, new. I mean, we started when this committee started, and we put these tools together. They're now ready. They're up and they're functional. But we as a group are still needing to find our cadence in when and how we meet. We meet online and we also meet over Zoom rooms when and as needed. But we will get these links up and running. And again, the purpose of the tools, the links is an informational tool for ccTLD managers to come to grips with DNS abuse.

The other thing I would like to mention that we're doing is a dedicated email list and contact list. Those of you who are members of the ccNSO have heard me say this before and talk about the repository before, but we feel that we need to keep making these references so that we get over the initial hurdle of getting people up and running on this.

With respect to the dedicated email list, this is a creation along the lines of what we know in ccNSO as the TLD-OPS list. That is a dedicated discreet email list that is meant to be for ccTLD managers a tool to use to ask questions, make contacts, to announce things that they're seeing that they haven't seen before, to express phenomena that they're coming across.

It's an email list, so as a consequence it can't be guaranteed to be confidential, but it is meant as a discreet list for ccTLD managers. And they will through participation in the list get contacts through which they can make individual discussions with ccTLD managers who may

have grappled with the issue that they're facing in the past and have that conversation, that discussion with those managers.

And so this list too is now done, ready, up and running. And we're asking people to subscribe. They can subscribe up to four colleagues. But everybody that joins the list has to join individually. One person cannot do the joining for a colleague. Unlike TLD-OPS which started before the GDPR, ICANN has a different regimen with respect to sign-ups, privacy, etc.

Kim, did you want to make a point?

KIMBERLY CARLSON: [inaudible]

DAVID MCAULEY: Okay. And so you'll see—those of you who are ccTLD managers, members of the ccNSO—you'll see when you try to join this list that you cannot bring your colleagues on for them. They have to sign up themselves.

And so that list, again I'll say, is up and running. I'm going to get my colleagues to join. I tried to join [them] myself and couldn't quite do it. But in any event, it's going to be a useful list.

We plan, this group of us, to do some marketing. To actually do some marketing, email marketing. Attachments will be there. We're going to have cards. We just haven't done it yet. By the next ICANN meeting expect it.

I took my hand and tried to come up with some marketing language, but I have the leaden hand of a lawyer and so it was just complete hash. And so we're going to have to start that process again going down a different avenue. But we will. And we are going to do our best to get these groups up, vibrant, responsive.

They exist and our plan is to get the word out. That's what I'm trying to do right now verbally to ccNSO members here, and you'll hear more of the same from us. Forgive us for the repetition, but we want to get this thing rolling substantively and importantly.

I think I've covered most of it, Nick, in concept. And if there are any questions, I'm happy to take them.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: I've got a couple of questions. Are there any questions from the room or any questions in the chat?

BART BOSWINKEL: There is one.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Go for it.

BART BOSWINKEL: This is from Luke [inaudible] from [Namespace]: "Any chance to get access to this list as registrar of a ccTLD? Maybe a version that you are more comfortable sharing outside ccTLD managers?" So that's the question.

DAVID MCAULEY: Thank you, Bart. Thank you, Luke. Well, I'll speak for myself. As one of the six in the repository group, I can't make a decision. Fernando here on my left is a member. My personal take on that would be possibly in the future, but not immediately. We need to get the list up and running. There's an element of trust there, you know, openness. We have to be careful how we deal with contacts.

And so it's a fair question. It's a good question. And it's an idea for us to consider. But frankly, our mission right now as I see it is let's get this thing rolling and get a significant amount of traction on this. That's our first order of business as I see it. Fernando, did you want to say anything about it? Thank you.

FERNANDO ESPANA: Yeah, I agree with what was just said. Initially, it's intended for ccTLDs only, and maybe at a future time we will open it up. But that will be discussed as well.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Okay, thank you. But, Luke, if I find anything interesting, I will forward it on to you. So don't worry that you're missing out. John Crain?

JOHN CRAIN: Having the privilege of having the previous list and having had to use it on many occasions, are you planning to do any education around the kind of data that is useful in the list? I found things like desk phones. Not particularly useful on a Saturday afternoon when nobody is answering

the phone and things like that. So are you going to do any kind of materials around what kind of dates to put in and how it can be used and how useful it is? Because I think it is really useful. I mean, I've used it. I've picked up the phone and called people when they've had issues.

DAVID MCAULEY: Thank you, John. To be honest, we haven't gotten to that point yet. Our first goal is to describe it generally as an email list on which we expect people to make contact with respect to DNS abuse issues generally or even conceptually, and to trade information, if they're experiencing something for the first time to mention it. If they have information regarding it, to mention that. Maybe to take the discussion offline. Whatever they wish.

So again, Fernando, if you want to mention anything, please let me know. But that's the take I have so far. But again, we will take all this onboard as we go forward.

JOHN CRAIN: And I realize this is a slightly different use case as well, so phone's probably less useful and stuff. But I do applaud this.

BART BOSWINKEL: Yeah, maybe in addition or, John, because you were involved in creation of TLD-OPS, one of the elements that will happen is that TLD-OPS, I think they share the contact details of people who are subscribed once a month. This one is intended to do the same thing only not on that regular basis but going forward because, again, different use case.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Okay, thank you. So I understood with the repository that obviously there's a process of moderation. So it goes to the editorial board. The email list, is that unmoderated or is there any sort of filter? So if I've just put any old thing in it, will it automatically go out to the rest of the people on the list or is there a moderation step involved? I feel I should know the answer to that.

DAVID MCAULEY: Bart, I'll be interested in what you have to say. But yes and no, in a sense. All we're going to do on the email list is make sure that someone is a member of a ccTLD, frankly, and we haven't gotten beyond that.

BART BOSWINKEL: No, I think that's the trust element in that sense. That's why you don't want to open it up. There is a question from—that's why I was nodding—from Mark Datysgeld: "Is there an expectation for non-ccNSO members to be able to interact in this session or would that be better saved for a future opportunity?" No, you can absolutely interact during this session.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Yes, it's a very inclusive and open group. Even though it's the ccNSO, it's very welcome to have all community members. I think particularly when I reflect on our Terms of Reference, which I often do in moments of insomnia, that part of our mission is actually outreach and community interaction and talking to other parts of the community.

This is supposed to be an expansive process, not a navel gazing exercise.

When it comes to DNS abuse, I know we've taken a specific decision to not define what DNS abuse means. And I think as ccTLDs we have a lot more latitude to say this is something which is an abuse of our TLD infrastructure and we don't have to get too hung up on the semantics of the division between content and non-content.

For example, PIR have started doing these free services to ccTLDs or gTLDs as well around CSAM, domain hopping, all of these other sorts of things which I think I would like to see included. I just wanted to give the community assurances that we're not going to be too narrow-minded, pedantic on the [well that's] content so actually you need to talk to somebody else. I don't think it's responsible for us to just point to other people when there are things that should be shared with the community for better safety.

DAVID MCAULEY: Nick, thanks. That's an interesting point. I frankly think, we haven't faced that yet to be honest with you, but when an issue comes up like that I think it would not be for us six to make the decision. I think we would bump that up to the DASC—which we serve on obviously—to the DASC and the DASC would either make the decision or coordinate with council. But I think it would be fair to say that in the future it would be nice if the information that's contained in the repository each element has a fair description of what it is. And if it goes beyond traditional understood definitions of DNS abuse, as long as that is clear I don't

think anyone would have an objection. But it's really going to be up to the DASC, I think.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Yeah, we haven't come onto it yet. It's further down the agenda when it comes to the survey. But as you know, many of the ccNSO membership have a much wider definition of abuse than the technical abuse. We appreciate there are technical abuses, but I think almost all ccTLDs would action CSAM. [inaudible] one of their domain names pointed to that sort of content that the registry would act. And therefore, I think it should fall within the sort of resources that we provide because I think it's fantastic. There are free resources. We should publicize them to our membership. That's part of the point.

BART BOSWINKEL: Mark?

MARK DATYSGELD: Thank you very much for saving this space. This is Mark Datysgeld, GNSO Council from the non-contracted side. I was [inaudible] DNS abuse. I see the subject of tools coming up. I have been working on some tools to track DNS abuse and combat it.

One thing that's notable among ccTLDs is non-adoption of RDAP or at least not a public-facing RDAP. What that does from my perspective as somebody who is researching this and trying to come up with ways to mitigate it is that it doesn't allow me to really help the ccTLDs. So I end up in a situation where I can produce data that's relevant for generics

and that will probably advance their comprehension in this. But then I can't really contribute to the CCs because I don't have an RDAP interface.

So I wonder if it is in the interest of the group to discuss this subject. If it is something that you have considered in the past or that you would like to have a look at. And in case not, where would be a forum to raise this question? I'm not saying CCs should implement RDAP. It's their decision. But do they want to? Is it something desirable? Can we help in any way?

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thank you for the question. I think that if—I mean, this is just my instinctive response, right—but I think if there's a barrier in the way to observing or measuring DNS abuse and perhaps ccTLDs are not aware that non-implementation of tools like RDAP are causing issues, then I think it's perfectly legitimate to raise those because probably ccTLDs are not aware that that's an issue.

I mean, an RDAP implementation is not an overnight job. This is complex even for those of us who have initiated RDAP and are looking to retire traditional WHOIS services like we in .uk have done.

This actually leads onto the next item. And we had a very nice discussion in one of the phone calls, one of the Zoom meetings of the committee. And I wanted to not have the same conversation again, but I wanted to use that as a rehearsal for a mini review.

Because it's now two years since we've been in this group, and I was trying to open up a more, not philosophical discussion, but are we on

the right path? Is DNS abuse still an issue for the community? Is there increasing interest in the topic? Is it decreasing? Has it plateaued? Is it still the high-interest area that it was which prompted us to set up the DASC in the first place?

I wanted to just sort of sound people out as to whether or not this was still something that…are we spending the right amount of resources? Is this a useful use of community time? I always reflect that volunteer time is limited and constrained and that we need to as a council, as I put my council on, we need to think very carefully about where we focus our effort and is this still something which is useful.

I just would be very interested from other parts of the community or people in the CCs as to what they think about that sort of question. Is it still something that is an area for discussion? So I don't know who wants to kick off the debate. I can't remember who was in that conversation initially because it was really interesting where we took a moment to step back from the granular detail of, okay, this is what's happening and took a bit more of a holistic opening up of it.

So I'll be very interested to know if there's other [inaudible] either from ICANN staff or other members of the community as to what they think about the DNS abuse topic as a thing. I mean, if there's no one really interested in talking about it, that might mean, maybe it tells me that, no, it's all sorted and fine and that gets us all done and wrapped up in a bow and nothing to see here. Is that fair?

BRIAN BECKHAM: Thank you, Nick. Brian Beckham from WIPO. I think it's a good question, and I don't have really an answer for you in terms of your question of increase, decrease, etc. But certainly, and I think in light of the comment from Mark, it's something that merits continuing focus. Whether that's just to see in six months is it more or less status quo, are things going up or down? But certainly, it seems something that's worth keeping on the radar. I know from brand owners that we're in contact with it's something they perceive to still be a continuing issue. So I think it's worth keeping the conversation and some monitoring tools at minimum.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thank you. I mean, is it still an issue? I mean, obviously, you have the contract amendments going through in the GNSO for the contracted parties. So I assume that to do that sort of thing which is, again, not an easy, quick fix, that it is something which is seen as important in other parts of the community. That's just my observation. Mr. Neylon?

MICHELE NEYLON: Good afternoon. Somebody made the mistake of giving me a chair close to a microphone. Thanks. I think the question is an interesting one. I'm trying to draw parallels between what happens in the gTLD space and the ccTLD space. It can be a bit of a challenge.

One of the issues within the gTLD space was kind of a pass the parcel type issue in some respects. Nobody wanted to take ownership and trying to force certain people to respond was problematic. But I don't think that's as much of an issue in the ccTLD space because you get

smacked in the nose by a government in many cases. I mean, not all ccTLDs are linked to countries. Anybody who thinks so is deluded, but there's always a bit of delusion.

Whether there needs to be as much focus on DNS abuse, I would say no. I think keeping an eye on it, measuring it, that can be useful. I disagree with the RDAP commentary. I think that's rubbish. That's absolute rubbish. You can get plenty of data without RDAP. I mean, RDAP is just for data mining. If that's what you're trying to do, no. There's plenty of data in other sources.

Keeping on eye on it, tracking it, looking at what it is and the difference between domain names that are registered and used specifically for abuse and compromised online resources, that's the big thing. What we see, our primary business is hosting. That's the core. That's where I make my money, not from this rubbish. And what we see most of the time is compromised websites. It's out of date CMSs. It's people doing stupid things like leaving directories with the wrong write permissions, etc.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Okay, well, I think certainly from a mature or large registry compromised sites is a massive issue. But that is itself quite a nuanced argument. People need to understand the differences. This is not necessarily a DNS mitigation action or any sort of failing by the registries. It's a completely different problem. But I think people need to understand that actually there are other facets to the topic around technical abuse and some of it has nothing to do with the registration. You can have the most perfect registration data and the squeakiest

domain name records, but actually it's still spewing out bad content. Bruce?

BRUCE TONKIN: Just to elaborate a little bit on what Michele is saying, in .au we see the same thing. It's mostly compromised websites. Usually the registration is more than five years old, and it's usually websites that are running something like WordPress.

I guess the terminology that's floating around in Australian circles is the concept of security by design. Which if you think about, say, an iPhone, the design part of it is that you're getting regular updates and the end user doesn't really need to do much about it. They just happen.

That is not the case in many websites. There is no security by design. Basically, whatever security was when the website was created five years ago is whatever security there is today. No updates. So I think that's something that we could perhaps get out a bit more is the concept of actually building these website services so that they have security by design. I think it's a really great topic for discussion, and I think it's a really important area.

I was going to say just one other little datapoint is that I know—and we're all friends—but certainly in the wake of what happened to the .tk domain which was obviously the Freenom model, there were tens of millions of free domains and quite heavily abused. We think we have seen a bit of an uptick of malicious registrations as that avenue has closed off. We think we've seen a little bit of an uptick in response to

that because it's not so easy to do that. So one avenue for bad actors gets shut down.

What I think is that it's still a very topical area, DNS abuse, and it is more important and it is evolving as different things happen and several things which I wouldn't have predicted like the .tk thing kind of came from nowhere but it has had quite a big impact across the industry. So I think we do need to continue focusing on it. I think that's probably been…unless there's anymore. Very welcome to having more comments on that, but we can get moving on. Oh.

ROWENA SCHOO: Hi, it's Rowena Schoo from the DNS Abuse Institute. I was going to restrain from saying anything because I didn't want to presume what ccTLDs would find important, especially not from an institute that has the name DNS abuse in it. But I think you set this committee up for reasons that still exist, and I think a lot of good work has come out of having that coordination point.

And I think you're right, when we talk about the gTLD contract amendments coming in I think that will change the landscape. And we don't really know exactly how that will change the landscape, and it seems sensible to me to still have some kind of focus around that in the ccTLD community as we progress. Whether you want to call it DNS abuse or call it something else, that's really up to you. But I think the work of the committee has been really important, really helpful, and really useful.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thank you. Michele, are you going to now contradict all of that?

MICHELE NEYLON: I generally try not to contradict her because she scares me a little. She usually beats me over the head with facts and things, so it's terrible.

No, I think one of the things as well just to think about is the way that content is presented on the Internet has evolved. Twenty-odd years ago when ICANN was but a child you had a much simpler ecosystem. Content was uploaded onto servers. There were registers that were hosting providers or registries.

These days it's more complex. You have companies like Cloudflare and others who are acting, kind of providing caching services, security services on top of that. So trying to see where the content actually resides is more complicated.

And it's like those companies in many cases don't see themselves as being hosting providers. They see themselves as being something else in many of these cases. They sell, well, no, no. We're not the host. We're just providing this thing on top. But they've become a huge part of the ecosystem.

And so for us even as a hosting provider if you say to me this domain is registered with you, many times I can't tell you where the damned thing is pointing because it's pointing to the Cloudflare.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Yeah. No easy answers. Hello, Bart.

BART BOSWINKEL: Comments online. One is from Luke [inaudible] again: "What difference do you see with WHOIS? It contains the same data [at AFAWC]. The DNS abuse fraud prevention we do does not rely on WHOIS data but on other data." That's the first comment or question. I don't know who wants to respond to it.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: This makes me hark back to the session in Hamburg, Day 0 on NIS2 which is all about essentially registration data verification and the intersection between is the review of the registration data part of the assessment as to whether it's an abusive registration in terms of technical abuse.

And the jury was a bit mixed, but certainly it seemed to be from what friends like my friend Brian said PIR make no assessment at all as to the registration data when it comes to deciding whether or not something's abusive and needs to be actioned. There are other extrinsic factors you get where you can see it's being used for phishing or malware. So that was quite an interesting area.

What's the next one?

BART BOSWINKEL: The next one is from John McCormac: "The DNS abuse characteristics of ccTLDs are often different to gTLDs. The low cost of some gTLDs enables some forms of DNS abuse which is rarely seen in ccTLDs. Some

of this is volume based whereas ccTLDs DNS abuse tends to exploit the trust of ccTLDs. DNS abuse evolves; it doesn't disappear."

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: I think I completely agree with that last point about the evolution as opposed to it disappearing. And actually, John, it's really interesting because we did look at the relationship in the ccTLDs between registration price and whether that would have a correlation with increased tendency to have abuse. And actually, we found—just want to put it on the record I should say I'm the general counsel for .uk which is one of the larger, cheaper registries along with .de—and actually we scored pretty well in terms of the per 100,000 [DUM] abuse stats.

So we did go looking for some sort of thought around are the domains so cheap effectively that they become disposable assets for abuse. And we didn't find that so much in the ccTLDs space, but I know it is something that has been discussed. And historically we talked about essentially [quasi tasting]. The domains are so cheap that you can use them as disposable tools.

So I think just to be mindful of time we've got until the top of the hour, and I just wanted to talk then further on the next couple of items which are coming up. The first one is the Kigali meeting where actually I think to summarize a conversation that we had in the DASC itself we do want to see that as an opportunity for capacity building given that we'll be in the African region. So we're a little bit more of a capacity building around tools and measures workshop, a little bit of helping registries to expand our mission to share best practice, to give people access to the resources which they should have.

And we did also want to talk a little bit about the…obviously, we don't tell ccTLDs what to do, but we like to unpack issues. So where there's an industry standard change on the global level in terms of the Registrar Accreditation Agreement for ICANN accredited registrars I think it's useful to start to look at whether there are some lessons for the ccTLD community in terms of, as we've talked before, we don't want abuse just to move from one place to another. As I'm very proud of saying that the ccTLDs have very low levels of abuse relevant to gTLDs for reasons which we don't fully understand, but that's what the data seems to say. So we need to be protecting of that situation. And if the gTLDs are raising their standards through their contract modifications, then first shouldn't we also consider doing the same? And secondly, since we largely use the same registrar set or there's a very large overlap between gTLD registrars and ccTLD registrars, shouldn't we make it easier for those registrars by having industry standard provisions across all TLDs whether they're ccTLDs or gTLDs?

So those are the two items on the agenda for the Kigali ICANN meeting. We did talk about that in the context of a closed working session of the DASC. And I wanted to make sure that if we're going to go down that, we do need to plan that quite soon because it's coming up pretty quickly and I don't want us to waste time and resources on doing that work now if people feel that we're on the wrong track in terms of useful topics to be discussed at ICANN80.

So just hold your thoughts there for a moment. I'm very interested to hear whether that sounds like a sensible plan.

Item 6 on the agenda you can see. And I can't really believe it but it was now nearly two years ago that we started working on sort of a global survey of ccTLDs. And the results from that survey I think have been very interesting and useful. And we did say that we would repeat that survey and hopefully show various datapoints amongst the ccTLD community have changed and changed in a positive sense.

For example, one of the findings of the survey was that ccTLDs, I think about 30% of them stated that they did not know how much abuse they had. And there were various reasons for that. Largely there were quite small numbers of abuse, so it's pretty hard to determine for some ccTLDs. But we wanted to see whether by virtue of having these sorts of discussions and socializing the topic among ccTLDs that actually there had been some movement in some of those datapoints.

Rashly, we said that we would repeat the survey in two years' time, and that's going to be basically in Q4 of 2024. So we wanted to look at whether there's general support for repeating the survey and have the benefit of the first survey to refine some of the questions maybe to simplify it and avoid some sort of potentially confusing language and are there any other questions that we in hindsight would have liked to have asked. And when we talked about the survey and the socialization with groups with high-interest like the GAC, for example, who were very interested in the survey.

So you'll see on the screen if you have excellent long-distance vision, that we're looking at reviewing the survey questions and then having the survey run through essentially calendar September 2024, with a view to evaluating and then having a little quick look at the results—at

least the early results—at the ICANN81 meeting in Istanbul. And how does that sound like a plan?

So I promised when I took over chairing this group that I would try to create a bit of a forward view as to what was coming up and what we were doing and the thinking behind it. I think hopefully I've just tried to present that in a coherent way, or maybe less than coherent way. But is that sounding like sort of plan for the next couple of ICANN meetings? Are there any comments or feedback?

Because like I say, we really want to make use of the valuable time and if we're not doing what our communities or the wider community wants us to do, then we're definitely in listening mode. Because we don't want to just go off and create a bunch of things which people are not interested in or think that we missed a trick by doing it the way that we did. Bruce?

BRUCE TONKIN: Just picking up on a few of your topics there. Firstly, I think a workshop on tools and measurements makes sense. My general observation I think there's a lot of work in the last 12 months or so in measurements. So we've got a number of groups doing a lot more work on measurement.

The reporting tools are probably fairly mature now. There are a lot of platforms and tools for reporting DNS abuse. There are probably less tools or discussion that I've seen on identifying cases of DNS abuse in your own system proactively. And the reason I say that is that I think

most of us are getting pretty good if we get a report, we take action on it.

But obviously, that doesn't stop people creating another domain name or compromising another website. And so part of getting better at it is actually trying to get ahead of the bad actors and shut them down well before we even get a report. So some discussions about those tools I think would be helpful.

On 5(b) amendments to the registry agreement, I'd certainly say that .au is looking at updating its registrar agreement to align with terminology and things that are in the gTLD agreement, partly for the reasons you said just to provide a uniform environment for our registrars that are generally both gTLD and .au registrars. There wouldn't be too many registrars we have that are not gTLD registrars.

And then the last area there, the survey, as cited last time, I'm happy to help review the questions and refine that survey.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thank you. And I think, yeah, obviously, I'd much prefer to be in the business of preventing fires than putting them out. So I think that's a very interesting area. I mean, I have to say in .uk we are definitely going to look at the same things. And I've spoken to numerous other general counsel for ccTLDs where they're looking at the gTLD base agreement changes with a view to copying it. I think nothing wrong with copying other people's good work. So thanks, Bruce. Were there any other thoughts? Okay.

MICHELE NEYLON: Yeah, I mean, I think the other thing, there should be a balance to this. I mean, it's one thing to look at ways of preventing abuse before it happens, but it can be a bit of a slippery slope. Because you're then into the realm of automated decision-making. You're looking at pulling domains down based on some kind of ruleset which, if implemented incorrectly, can cause more headaches than anything else.

I mean, one of our beloved clients was using a rather dumb antispam measure a few years ago. My company name is Blacknight. He decided to block emails containing the string "black" because he was getting particular types of spam. It's a ridiculous example but it's real. He missed his renewals because of it.

And some registries have been playing around with AI. Some of them have been trying out different things. And it's like these are all ways of getting indications about things, but you still need to have human oversight in many cases and you also need to be doing some kind of balancing test. I mean, are you going too far the other way? There's a human rights impact as well.

But I'm looking at some of these things that people are talking about to "Protect the world. Those poor little trademark holders. The poor little babies." And it's like, well, okay fine. But pretty much every word in the dictionary is probably trademarked somewhere. So if I want to have an apple and I want to eat an apple, I am not infringing on Apple the computer companies trademarks while I'm doing that. And if I want to talk about apples, I should be able to talk about apples without getting hit with a takedown.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Other fruits are available. So, yeah, all interesting points. I mean, I think this something that I've reflected on many times over the years. And you and I have discussed we tend to not have a blocking thing but we tend to put a bit of friction in where there appears to be a high risk of technical abuse. But we're a big registry. Yeah, but you know, this does fall down to still a small number of key staff to do the manual reviews. It's not [inaudible].

MICHELE NEYLON: Sure, but the thing, Nick, with all due respect, you have the resources. Some of the smaller registries don't. So the thing is it's not an even playing field. A large registry could invest, let's say, €200,000 in a project whereas a small registry, that's probably their entire turnover for the year. So you're not playing with the same set of tools.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: I think that's a fair point. And I think it comes back to this capacity building, particularly in the African region. We desperately want to move the dial on that and the larger registries who are represented want to share and provide knowhow and learning and to help people understand. Because it's not straightforward. These questions are not straightforward. It's a complicated and difficult area and we think it's really important and we want to give the whole community the same sort of privilege and resources that some of us who are—I was going to say lucky enough for it—maybe unlucky enough to work for the registries that we work for and with all of their quirks.

But, yeah, I think it's a fair point. But that doesn't mean to say that we shouldn't put a huge amount of effort into making sure that we do upskill everybody because there's no point. As we said, we're mostly nonprofits. We don't want to see something…it's great being custodians of a nice safe space [which] you have on your own. No good if it just goes to somewhere else, right? We want to make the whole ecosystem better. That's part of the objective and the mission here.

In terms of the survey questions, we will go through in our working group. We've got a bit of time before September. It's quite a long process, and the more eyes that are on it the better in terms of improving it. So I will be asking everybody to give input and to have a quick scan through and see how we can improve it. Because we'll get better data back from that ultimately. [inaudible]?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah, Nick and others, just a short comment about what Michele said and what was said before. Maybe this is something that we can add into the next survey, the questions about resources, tools, and measurements. Not with the answers that are yes, no, or whatever, numerical values but something with in-depth comments.

Because to me, one of the most valuable outputs of the survey was not only statistics but also the in-depth analysis of text comments to see the full picture. And I think we can see the better picture if we ask to comment about resources, about activities, about tools, about measurements and so on and so forth. So maybe we should finetune the survey to bring up some of the items that came out in the discussions today.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: I think that's a really good point. And I know I loved reading some of the detailed commentary to the questions as part of the survey group. I do want to say also that there were a lot of smaller registries where basically they had maybe single digit instances of actionable abuse in the whole calendar year. So not surprisingly, they didn't have much resources on it and they weren't really able to put clear statistical values on it because it's sort of a black swan event for them sometimes.

So I think we need to be careful not to create questions where if you're not careful you're drawing conclusions actually which are misleading. So you need to be very careful about that data analysis. That was one of my main learnings from the first survey.

So any further questions on this? Oh, Bart? Or is this online?

BART BOSWINKEL: It's more from a planning perspective. So just to confirm because this is the opportunity to discuss it. Kigali is in three months, so effectively you have six to eight…you have six meetings to organize any tools and measurement workshop and the amendments to the gTLD base registry agreement. Whether you want to use this as two topics. Just seeking confirmation because then we know what we have to plan for, and you as the DASC need to know what you're planning for. So just are you willing to put in the effort to have these two sessions at Kigali?

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: I mean, I could answer that question. I think it's more useful if other members of the group answer it.

BART BOSWINKEL: Sure, thanks. Let me rephrase it. Do you think it's worthwhile trying to organize these two sessions for Kigali? If you think it is, please show you're hand. Especially the UA and others as well. Yeah, okay. Sleepless nights.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Yeah, or early mornings in my case. Which is horrible. I'm not really an early morning sort of a guy it turns out. Fine. So we have ten minutes left. Looking forward to this meeting we have on 6 March, the Wednesday, there will be an update from this working group to the whole ccTLD community, one of the plenary update sessions, I think. So I have certainly done some slides for that, or someone has done some slides for me which I'll attempt to read coherently.

So again, we are going to be putting a bit of effort into socialization of the resources in terms of repository of useful resources for the ccTLDs and this email list. And we will, I think, probably go through the same sort of topics going forward in terms of the forward looking plan. I like to have a six- to twelve-month forward looking plan of the sorts of things that we're going to be looking at doing. The ones close up are more defined; the ones further away are a bit grayer. But I like to see that there's sort of a forward plan and momentum.

Because I think it's been a really great group and I've been very pleased to be involved with it, but it's important we keep the momentum going.

And I really want to keep people enthused and active and participating. I think it's part of the fun of this sort of work.

So I don't know if there's anything more that we really need to say. If there are any more questions in the chat. If there are any more general observations. I'm very open to feedback if people think that there are better ways to handle these working groups. Hello, Reg. Sorry, you're just in my line of sight, so I'm sorry I called you out [inaudible].

REG LEVY: No. I'm really looking forward to the output of the next survey because I was quite interested in the first survey results and I look forward to seeing how it is modified and improved on. And I'm especially interested in how registries determine whether or not there is DNS abuse. And the reason for that is because I'm starting to hear from registries that they are very interested in combatting DNS abuse in their namespace, which is great. Some are going to start impacting pricing, which is also fine. And then they will send us reports that say here are some domains that may have DNS abuse. And they don't have links. They don't have what type. They don't have anything that says they do. Just sort of a might. So I would be interested to see how each registry or, not calling people out, but how groups of registries make those sorts of determinations within their namespace.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Okay, thank you. Tanya?

[TANYA FORSYUK]: Yeah, I just wanted to comment on what Reg said. I think one of the interesting outcomes of the previous survey and where we might want to finetune the questions was this tension between how registries can define it and what is defined by laws, by the national laws, by the national frameworks. Because sometimes the ccTLD managers are operating within their space which is predetermined. So I'm just making a note for myself as to whether we need to finetune these questions and how would we shape them a bit better. Because this was something we actually got from the text comments sometimes. This tension between what you can define, what you can do, and what your national legislature obliges you to do and the borders they establish themselves. And this might be not always compatible.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Yeah, and I think coming back to Reg's question, I mean, I think for people who have their ccNSO bingo cards you'll find that ccTLDs are different from the gTLDs and also within the ccTLDs there's a huge range of different approaches depending on not least the legal and linguistic and other sorts of cultural backgrounds of the ccTLDs in question.

REG LEVY: Sorry, to be clear, when I said registries I meant ccTLD registries.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Potato, potato, whatever. Thank you though. So I think we have exactly five minutes. So if there are any further questions, any further interest, any other things that people want to put on the horizon scanning or

agenda? Brian, are there any more questions? Oh, I've got two. Double Brian. So Brian first.

BRIAN BECKHAM: Thanks, Nick. You know, something that you, Nick, and Michele said makes me wonder. And I appreciate that there's the resource question, the review question, and potentially a need to integrate systems and things like that take time. But I wonder when you mention some of the tools that you use, Nick, in Nominet and I recall there was a session, a presentation I think it was from Belgium and Netherlands in Hamburg, describing some of the tools that they use to more proactively get at potential abuse.

I wonder, are those types of tools something that are available to be shared in both the ccNSO and maybe even the gTLD community on an open source or free license basis? Or are those something that…are there reasons that those aren't able to be shared? Because it seems like if there's good work that individual registries are doing, it's worth allowing others to be able to benefit from that.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thanks for the question. I'm happy to just give my tuppence worth which is that we have yet to find the single source which is for registries, a registries actionable data on specifically DNS abuse as opposed to poor reputation or gambling sites or whatever. You tend to find that there are blocklists you have commercially available or freely available. They don't speak to these things.

So there's a huge amount of work goes into the processing of the raw data, deduplicating, removing the false positives. It's not straightforward. I think most people subscribe to it on a per TLD basis.

I think there are quite good free resources, and I think it comes back to the capacity building thing. That actually the knowhow as to what you need to do to get useful actionable data efficiently without using huge amounts of manual [inaudible] labor is probably the sweet spot.

I mean, Bruce, you and I have spoken about this sort of stuff. You have the same things around the quality of the false positives. And it's a real problem, actually.

BRUCE TONKIN: Following up from [inaudible], at least in .au we manually verify everything. We never pass anything unless we can verify it. So there are a lot of false positives, yeah.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thank you, and Brian?

BRIAN CIMBOLIC: Thanks, Nick. Brian Cimbolic, PIR. And, no, Michele, I'm not here to talk about apples. Nick mentioned the IWF sponsorship that PIR is doing. It was announced about a month ago. So the Internet Watch Foundation is the [in hope] network provider for the United Kingdom. We partner with them to offer two free services to registries. It doesn't matter gTLD or ccTLD, so in the spirit of providing free resources to ccTLD operators.

One is aimed at preventing strings that are dedicated to child sexual abuse materials or CSAM. That's called the TLD hopping list. And one is notifying registries in real time when child sexual abuse material is identified in their TLDs.

I wanted to just in particular note that before we at PIR started working with IWF we had in five years a total of four URLs sent to us and in the five years after that, 5,700. So it's not that it wasn't there. It's that we didn't have the tools available to identify it. And even the cleanest [zones], overwhelmingly 90% of the URLs that are sent to us are on generic file sharing sites. Which I'm sure many/most of you have file sharing sites in your TLDs.

So having the tools available to be notified when CSAM occurs and then having a process to follow has been very helpful to us, so we're very happy to offer it. I posted a link in the Zoom chat earlier for more information about those links. But also, please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions. We really do hope that registries take advantage of this. Again, no cost to any registry except for the domain alerts if you're already an IWF member. I see Nick and David looking at me from Verisign and Nominet. Thanks.

NICK WENBAN-SMITH: Thank you, Brian. And I think that's a nice way to summarize we are here to—I talked to [inaudible] about this before about how the very fact of discussing things, socializing things and raising awareness actually changes behavior. And we start by brining things up into the open and talking about them.

The quality of understanding around, say, the difference between compromised and maliciously registered [inaudible]. You do need to repeat it about 10 million times, especially to government officials. But, yeah, it starts to get to a slightly better quality of understanding and actually then sharing out that information amongst the community, it's a slow process but it does start to generally raise standards across the board.

The fact that we are here talking about these important things changes behavior and ultimately we hope removes some of this abusive behavior. And I would say content abuse is something I think that we all would put in terms of our anti-abuse policies as ccTLDs. So thank you for that, Brian.

And it's one minute past. Sorry I'm late. Is there any other any other business? In that case, I will wrap up the session. Thank everyone very much for your contribution. It was a really great meeting. Very happy, of course, to hear any feedback about my monologue and bad jokes. Cheers.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]