
ICANN80 | PF – Joint AFRALO-AfriCANN Meeting
Wednesday, June 12, 2024 – 13:45 to 15:00 KGL

YESIM SAGLAM:

Hello and welcome to the Joint AFRALO-AfriCANN meeting. My name is Yesim Saglam, and I'm 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.

If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom and when called upon, please unmute your line on Zoom to speak. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Interpretation for this session will include English, French and Arabic. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English. Please remember to speak at a reasonable pace. And with that, I will hand the floor over to Hadia Elminiawi, AFRALO Chair.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Yesim. This is Hadia for the record. And welcome all to the AFRALO-AfriCANN session. AFRALO is proud to celebrate Africa's role as the host of the ICANN80 high-level meeting and we take this opportunity to thank Kigali for their hospitality and excellent organization.

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ICANN80 marks the first ICANN meeting in Africa since the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, the internet was recognized as a crucial tool, not only for socializing but also for providing services, conducting work and businesses. In light of this, the theme of AFRALO's sessions during ICANN80 is bridging digital divides, connecting cultures for Africa's digital empowerment.

First, we will have a look at our agenda for today but before that, I would like to welcome Tripti, ICANN Board Chair. Thank you, Tripti, for being with us today. The agenda, we will start with welcoming remarks from Jonathan Zuck, ALAC Chair. Then we have guest speakers, Sally Costerton, Interim President and CEO of ICANN, Alan Barrett, ICANN Board Director. Dr. Catherine Adeya, ICANN Board Director Member, Leon Filipe Sanchez Ambia, ICANN Board Director and At-Large representative, Pierre Dandjinou, Vice President, Stakeholder Engagement for Africa.

Then we will have Mutegeki Cliff introducing today's topic for us. And then Abdeljalil Bachar Bong will be presenting the statement. The statement is under the title, Bridging the Digital Divide, Empowering Africa Through Multilingual Internet Africa. And it is translated in Arabic and in French. After that, we will have-- I must say also that the statement incorporates recommendations that we received from our roundtable discussions on Monday on the internet infrastructure as it relates to the DNS and the importance of a multilingual internet.

Then we will discuss the statement, modify it if we need to and then adopt it. Then we have the closing remarks. So, seeing no hands up

and nothing in the chat, the agenda is adopted and I invite Jonathan Zuck, the Chair of the ALAC, for the opening remarks.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Thanks, Hadia and thanks everyone for having me here. The African community within ICANN, both within the At-Large community and around the rest of the ICANN community, is incredibly essential to the future of the internet and in particular of the domain name system. Roughly, we have about 60% of the population of the world online and another 40% to go. And I think we need to get much more creative in how we bring the next billion people online.

And it's going to require trying to find the kind of secret sauce of providing multi-language services, multilingual content, internationalized domain names and generally promoting, as your statement said, infrastructure development as well. So, not all of this is in ICANN's remit, but I think through the grant program, we'll see more and more things develop around the world and hopefully throughout Africa that aren't necessarily right in ICANN's remit but that are about internet infrastructure and some of the development that needs to take place there.

The statement that you prepared is, I think, a very poignant one and very timely for the conversations that we're having right now about the next round of gTLDs. I mean, when you look at a map of where the registries are in the world, it looked identical after the 2012 round to the way it looked before. So, all the attempts that were made to try and change the nature of that map and to have registry service providers

and registries in other regions around the world were essentially a failure and we're really working hard to make sure that they aren't this time around.

And when that subcommittee formed to try and come up with metrics for the Applicant Support Program, it actually included real numbers of successful applicants from around the world. And sometimes the argument is made that, well, it doesn't matter who runs your internet infrastructure. What's the big deal? And I think that unfortunately, without the sort of local knowledge of priorities and what content should be put in place and what kind of services need to be provided, it still creates a barrier to entry for people. Because if there isn't the content that brings people to the internet in the form of government services or related internet activities, then people just won't sign on.

And so, I think it really makes sense for to build locally, build infrastructure locally to have registry service providers in the region and have registries that are local to the region. And so, we're very committed as the At-Large community to making sure that this is the case in this next round of new gTLD applications.

And another part of this, of course, is Universal Acceptance, which we've talked about, I think, the last few of these meetings that we've had together. And what an important role that this community has played in evangelizing the notion of Universal Acceptance within your region. When the At-Large decided to band together and try and deliver a lot of outward-facing information about Universal Acceptance, it was this community that really delivered the most.

And so, I think that's a very good sign that we have a very robust community beyond just here in the ICANN sphere, but in the region as well, which I think we're really going to need to find folks that might be good candidates for community TLDs or geographic TLDs within your region. And so, we have a lot of work to do there, but I think we have the right group of people to do it.

So, I'm very supportive of the statement that you put together and the goals that it contained with respect to infrastructure build-out and internationalized domain names. And I'm very glad to be a part of this community. And so, I thank you. And I think we have a lot of work to do, but I feel very optimistic about our ability to succeed. So, thank you very much for having me here.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Jonathan, for your support. And I would like to ask Tripti if she would like to say a few words.

TRIPTI SINHA:

Can you hear me? Yes? Okay. Well, first, I'd like to say thank you very much for having me at this meeting on behalf of the Board. We're first delighted to be in Africa. Kigali has been wonderful. The warmth and the welcome, and just how gracious everyone has been. And Jonathan said a lot of what I would have said, which is really and truly the next growth in the DNS industry needs to be here in the Global South. And UA and IDNs speak to exactly that. I hope you'll take advantage of that.

And President Kagame's agenda for Africa, the Agenda 2030, we hope that DNS, the internet, indeed will play a pivotal role. And we, ICANN, in our own narrow technical remit, will also play a very critical role. So, all the best in your meeting, and thank you very much for allowing me to observe.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Tripti. And now we move to Alan Barrett, ICANN org Board Director. Alan, the floor is yours.

ALAN BARRETT:

Thank you. Thank you, Hadia, for inviting me. This is Alan Barrett, ICANN Board member. It's always a pleasure to join these meetings. Also, I know that the Board reads the statements with great interest every time. So, yeah, this time the statement is on addressing the digital divide, and that is very important. There are many aspects to this.

It includes building improved infrastructure, and that's both infrastructure for networks as well as infrastructure for the DNS in particular. Reducing prices, which is not always easy, but I think improved infrastructure can contribute towards reducing prices. And making content available in local languages. Africa has, I think, at least 2,000 local languages, and most content today is still in English and maybe French and Portuguese and Arabic, but not so much in the smaller local languages. And we do need to improve that to bridge the digital divide.

And increased use of internationalized domain names, I think, is part of this. And ICANN will be launching the next round of gTLDs in 2025, I think. And there's the opportunity to apply for new gTLDs. And Universal Acceptance of email addresses in all languages is important, and also not easy. There are software changes that will need to be made, but it's important to be aware of that and to implement those changes where you can. And so, all these topics have been mentioned in the draft statement, which will be presented later during this meeting. So, I commend the drafting team for all their good work. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Alan. And now, Dr. Catherine Adeya, ICANN Board Director member. Catherine, please go ahead.

CATHERINE ADEYA:

Thank you very much, Hadia. Just listening to Jonathan, Tripti, Alan, some of the things I may say or I think will keep saying may sound repetitive, but I think it's more for emphasis and to also support the statement. So, I thought I would approach this because I've spoken at the high-level government meeting, and I spoke on the session on enhancing infrastructure, internet infrastructure, and on the one on multilingual internet.

And just looking at Monday, for example, there was a lot of discussion on the digital divide and what needs to be done towards that, especially on meaningful connectivity. And we did emphasize that meaningful

connectivity is one of the pillars of ICANN's Coalition for Digital Africa, especially the Universal Acceptance that you've had being talked about and international domain names to promote inclusiveness and ownership that Tripti has just talked about.

And what became clear even on Sunday was the need for more partnership and coordinated efforts to address this. And of course, the challenges that remain in the digital divide, and you've spoken to them in the statement, things like inadequate infrastructure and, of course, the high costs of connectivity. And then as we moved on to Monday, quickly, we discussed the issues of the domain names and email addresses in local languages for ensuring digital inclusion of the African population. And I think this speaks again to aspects of the statement that you will present today.

We also discussed in detail the work ICANN is doing with the internet community to ensure that everyone has the ability to experience the full power of the internet using their chosen domain name and email address. Again, this is towards the goal of Universal Acceptance. And again, this is in the statement.

And finally, I know we also discussed, and I think Jonathan has spoken to it and Tripti as well, is what ICANN is also doing, and again, Coalition for Digital Africa, but things like the UA Days and having Universal Acceptance ambassadors, which we spoke at length about on Monday. But what was clear that came from the Monday discussions is there's a need for better communication and understanding on what is required in terms of Universal Acceptance and what it really means.

So, I look forward to hearing more on the statement, but I see that it covers the issues of the digital divide and the multilingual internet infrastructure that we've discussed since Sunday. Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Dr. Catherine Adia. And now ICANN Board Director Leon Philippe. And Leon is At-Large representative, and we thank you for that. Leon, the floor is yours.

LEON FELIPE SANCHEZ AMBIA: Thank you very much, Hadia. Good morning, everyone. [foreign language - karibu na asante kuamaliko [ph] - 00:15:54]. And thank you for having me here. Thanks for the invite. And it seems to me like I always say this because I always do, but it's a pleasure to be back here with you at this AFRALO-AfriCANN meeting. As I always say, it's one of my favorite sessions and one of my main sessions.

And I'm delighted to see that we have almost one third of the Board here with us. I would like to thank my Board colleagues for attending. It's highly appreciated. There were those days in which maybe only me and one other Board member would show up, but now I see Christian, of course, our Board Chair Tripti, Sally, Catherine, Martin over there, of course, Alan. And so, thank you for showing with your attendance that this is a relevant session and that the Board is mindful and looking at the work that AFRALO is doing.

We've always thought, or at least I've always thought that, as it was said by Tripti and other colleagues, that the next billion users, of course, will come from Africa, and it's important, the work that you do here. And I think I would like to concentrate, well, first of all, commend you for the work done with this statement. You always are cutting edge in drafting the statements and addressing the topics that are relevant for our community at different levels, and this statement is no exception to that.

The three recommendations that you formulate in your document are absolutely relevant, and I would like to concentrate on the capacity building and education. And I think that in Africa you have treasures in the academic side. I'm sad to not see Tijani here, but Tijani is an example of that. Aziz, of course, is another example of that. So we must definitely follow their steps and try to build on their work to continue educating, to continue building these capacities in the African continent, and taking the advantage of the At-Large community, the ALSs, which are, I think, the foundational strength of our community and the most powerful tool we have to get to those places in which we need to build these capacities and educate people.

So, thank you for the work you're doing, thank you for keeping the efforts, and of course you can always count on me to support your work and to help you in any way that is within my reach. And I won't take any more time because I know you are time-limited, but congratulations on this statement. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Leon, and thank you for your continuous support. Thank you also for mentioning AFRALO leaders that are not with us today. And now I would like to give the floor to Pierre Dandjinou. Pierre, the floor is yours.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Thank you very much, and I would like to welcome all the participants to this AFRALO-AfriCANN meeting. Always a pleasure to be around. And as you know, I was here earlier on to be talking on behalf of my colleague regional VPs on the partnership between AFRALO and GSE. So, I managed to update on a few things we were achieving in the regions.

I mean, here I would like to, of course, again, commend you on this statement that you put forward. This is not the first time you are doing this, but the most important aspect of it is that you are tackling some of the issues that are so important for Africa. Maybe I should just insist on a few things because part of what ICANN has been doing has been already spoken to, but maybe I will just go through a few quick details, you know.

When you are talking about bridging the digital divide, and you are talking about internet you call it multilingual internet infrastructure, which is something that I noted. This is the first time I'm hearing kind of multilingual internet infrastructure, but I believe, as far as we are concerned, ICANN is about focusing on a remit, which is about the DNS.

I have to also say that one of the things we are, I mean, when I say we, this GSE Africa, we are really trying to make people understand that the DNS itself is an infrastructure. So, thereby, you need to work in such a way that this contributes to the digital transformation of the continent. Under the CDA project, for instance, and we'll be launching the report that we commissioned, and that's really talking, I know, presenting the whole, I would say, photograph of this, of the environment here, IDN ICANN environment in Africa.

The DNS environment all of this, and if you please come to this Africa space, that will be happening soon in the same room. We'll be talking about this report that has enough statistics to show you the status, but also pointing to what one might be doing, actually. The consultants are around, and they'll be also responding to any questions you may have.

Again, talking about the internet infrastructure, some of the things we are already doing, and I read the statement, and I would say, well, there are so many issues here that you are pointing to, but I think ICANN is already addressing some of them, specifically within what we call the Africa strategy, because before the CDA, we did have a kind of strategy, and you all know it.

That strategy mostly was developed by yourself and by the community, and of course, the CDA came to kind of broaden the whole thing, but in fact, make it much more practical to us. So, we'll also be reporting back on the Africa strategy, but also on the CDA.

I believe, when coming back again on the infrastructure, the internet infrastructure, one or two things that we did, and ICANN did, I would

say, and is commendable, is what we call the ICANN managed root server cluster. We placed one in Kenya, Nairobi, and the second one in Egypt. And one of the things that we noticed is that those clusters, which is, of course, copies of the root servers, are already achieving a few things, which is about keeping the traffic, part of the traffic generating from Africa, keeping them within Africa.

So, we're having something like 30% of the traffic going through the MRS in Nairobi and also Egypt. I think these are quite important, because that's also reducing the latency, and thereby also kind of offering kind of some facility, but also in terms of fees that you are paying, we believe that that's also contributing already to the infrastructure. But, of course, the CDA is addressing the whole issue of the meaningful connectivity, inclusiveness, of course, and we also have a big chunk of this addressing the capacity development of ccTLDs.

And also, of policy makers. And last year, for instance, we were able to bring parliamentarians to this ICANN meeting. It's quite important, because we had so many things to learn from them, whereas they also point out to what we could be doing together. So, in a nutshell, I think things are happening. We are delivering a few things, but certainly we need to broaden the scope, and that gives the importance of the coalition. We call it the Coalition for Digital Africa. It's not just about ICANN, but it's about like-minded institutions.

We are having 12 of them, or even 13 of them right now, that are going to really put their resources together, and implement some of those projects that will be useful for boosting the digital transformation in

Africa. So, let me pause here, and again, thank you for having me here. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Pierre, and thank you for noting all those initiatives. And now I would like to welcome Sally Costerton, Interim President and CEO of ICANN. Thank you so much, Sally, for being with us today. Your presence is always important to us. Please take the floor.

SALLY COSTERTON:

Thank you, Hadia. I will try and speak slowly for the interpreters. I know this is always a challenge. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to meet in person again in Africa, and it is marvellous being here in Kigali. I must say, I love this city. I've never been here before. I think it's just a wonderful, special place, and this Convention Centre, I think, is proving to be wonderful for an ICANN meeting. I've had so many positive comments about it, and I think people are finding this a good and productive meeting, so it is great to be here together.

I'd like to congratulate you for hosting two roundtables this last Monday, in which you discussed enhancing internet infrastructure in Africa and building a multilingual internet. And the roundtables are addressing key issues for the region in a timely manner, as ICANN and the org and the community prepare, of course, for the next round, the launch of the next round in the spring of 2026. I know that we will be starting to discuss this much more actively as we move into the next stage of preparing for the opening of the round.

And I've been doing a lot of work over the past few months and also at this meeting with our staff teams who are involved in coordinating the outreach and engagement, as we first of all move to launching an Applicant Support Program, and then opening the round itself, and the opportunities to partner with you and to ask for your help to work with us as we come into individual countries in Africa, to look at where those potential applicants might be.

We will be reaching out with you to participate with us, to engage in those activities, to help to bring in new participants who might become new registries, and to help them to understand how the domain name system can help them build strong businesses that can give them global platforms for success. So, I know I'll be working a lot with Jonathan and the team to make sure that we're really aligned in terms of how we practically do that on the ground. So, more on that over the next few months.

I want to thank you also for your participation during the week. I have had so many positive comments from so many people about how wonderful it is to hear a lot of African voices around the table in person, sharing their thoughts and sharing their views. And of course, that's why we rotate the meetings, that's why we come to Africa. But I also want to thank you for being so engaged. You're not just showing up, you're participating, you're contributing, you're holding us accountable, you're really engaging in ICANN's work. Please continue to do that, we need to hear your voices.

I very much appreciate the thoughtful analysis you have done in the statement that you're going to be debating, including how do we close the digital divide, which has been a big topic of discussion at this meeting in particular, because of course it was a major theme, for those of you who don't know, it was a big part of the agenda on Sunday, for the High-Level Government Meeting. There were many, many African governments at that meeting, many big contributions from the floor and from the platform, and some excellent panels discussing exactly the same topic that you are addressing in this statement.

And the importance and development of the multilingual internet infrastructure and its criticality which you call out in the statement, and particularly the promotion of local language content, the support for IDNs and capacity building is an incredibly important part of our overall organisational priorities and focus, and not just us, but the wider internet community, and indeed the wider UN. And you heard Doreen Bogdan-Martin say the same thing, the ITU's priority is to connect the last 30% of the world's unconnected by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals are focused on similar goals. So, we're all trying to do the same thing, and thank you for everything you are doing to help ICANN to do its part.

So, I would like to continue to thank you for having this meeting, for inviting us to participate, for being you and carrying on doing the work that you do. And from the organisation's perspective, thank you for the support that you give us, but also let us support you, and if there is more we can do to help as we go through the next weeks and months, please continue to tell us. Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Sally, for those words and for pointing out the importance of the Applicant Support Program, the presence of African voices, closing the digital divide, IDNs, and a multilingual internet. And with that, I would like to hand the floor to Mutegeki Cliff in order to introduce the topic, and the penholders to introduce the topic.

MUTEGEKI CLIFF:

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Today, we gather to discuss a tool that has become indispensable in our lives. That's the internet. It's not merely a network of computers, but a network of people, ideas, and aspirations. And the internet is for everyone, and it's a digital expanse that begins with I, and that is each individual who connects and shares and contributes in this vast ecosystem.

The internet signifies the bonds that we form, and the seamless connections that do transcend borders and cultures. And the net is the delicate web that holds us together to foster unity and have a collaborative strength. I am particularly glad to have had the privilege of working with an incredible team, a dedicated and knowledgeable team of individuals from AFRALO and ICANN, and their collective expertise and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in shaping this statement. So together, we have strived to reflect our shared commitment to a more accessible, equitable, and open internet for all.

So, this occasion is particularly meaningful to me as a first-time penholder, and the topic at hand is close to home because digital divide is one of the things that I focus on in most of my work. And yes, so as we delve into the AFRALO-AfriCANN statement, which is titled Bridging the Digital Divide, Empowering Africa Through Multilingual Internet Infrastructure, let us remember that the internet is true power that lies in its inclusivity and its ability to bring us together. So, this statement starts with you, it connects with us, and it unites us in a common purpose. So, I will now hand over to Abdeljalil who will take us through the statement. Thank you.

ABDELJALIL BACHAR BONG: Thank you so much, Cliff. Statement, Bridging the Digital Divide, Empowering Africa Through Multilingual Internet Infrastructure. We, the members of the AFRALO ICANN community, who actively participated in the ICANN80 meeting, where the Joint AFRALO-AfriCANN meeting held on Wednesday, June 12th, 2024, in Kigali, Rwanda, engaged in a comprehensive, robust discussion on the topic, Bridging the Digital Divide, Empowering Africa Through Multilingual Internet Infrastructure.

And after an exhaustive discussion, we resolved as follows. That one, the digital divide refers to the gap between those with access to modern information and communication technology, ICT, and those without. Thus, the digital divide underscores an equal access to digital technologies, including smartphones, tablets, laptops, and the

internet, thereby creating a division, inequality, and inequity of access to information technologies and its resources.

Two, this divide is pronounced in Africa, with many regions lacking reliable internet access and the digital literacy needed to utilize online resources effectively. Three, one crucial aspect of bridging this divide is the development of a multilingual internet infrastructure. A multilingual internet will close the knowledge deficits beyond translation or transliteration within governments and non-government websites, thereby giving a voice to Africans in their own language or languages.

Additionally, the multilingual internet promotes localized content, which means that more Africans could come forward, document their own stories, upload, and positively occupy the space. Recognizing Africa's diverse linguistic landscape with over 2,000 spoken languages, it is essential to ensure that the internet infrastructure is accessible and inclusive for all. Multilingualism on the internet is not only a matter of cultural preservation, but also committed to advocating for multilingual internet infrastructure that can help close the gender-digital divide.

To achieve the above goal, we hereby make the following recommendations to bridge the digital divide, close the gender-digital divide, and empower every African, regardless of their linguistic background. To achieve the above goal, we hereby make the following recommendations.

One, promotion of local language content. Encourage the creation and dissemination of internet content in local African languages. This includes supporting local content creators and fostering partnerships with educational institutions, cultural organizations, and stakeholders like the telecommunication industries in Africa for their buy-in and support, especially in areas of providing the enabling environment using the digital networks. Develop initiatives to translate existing digital resources into multiple African languages to enhance accessibility.

Two, support for internationalized domain names, IDNs, and Universal Acceptance, UA. So first, advocate for the adoption and implementation of IDNs to allow users to register and use domain names in their native scripts and languages. Advocate and support the adoption of Universal Acceptance, which has as its principle that every top-level domain TLD should function within all applications regardless of script, number of characters, or how new it is. Universal Acceptance, Wikipedia. Provide technical and financial support to local registries and registers to implement and manage IDNs effectively and for UA adoption.

Three, capacity building and education. Conduct training activities and workshops to build the capacity of local communities, content creators, IT professionals, and internet users in multilingual web development and digital literacy. Collaborate with educational institutions to integrate multilingual digital literacy into curricula at all levels of education. Collaborate with ICANN's Global Stakeholder Engagement

Africa team to help in building technical capacity for the adoption of Universal Acceptance.

Collaborate with ICANN Universal Acceptance Steering Group, UASG, to build technical capacity and educational initiatives on Universal Acceptance. Advocate and promote Universal Acceptance across Africa by engaging all stakeholders including governments, businesses, the technical community, the DNS industry, educational institutions, and end users.

Following the conclusion of the two AFRALO-ICANN80 roundtable discussions, the following additional recommendations were made. Namely, one, building legislative capacity. ICANN can assist policymakers and legislators by enhancing their understanding and ability to advocate for necessary policies in Africa. This support includes highlighting essential policies to benefit the private sector.

Two, raising awareness and infrastructure expansion. With the next billion users projected to come for Africa, it is crucial to raise awareness and increase the number of root instances and servers. This will address questions of accessibility and the implications of connectivity. Three, improving DNS infrastructure. The DNS infrastructure is heavily dependent on the underlying internet infrastructure. Enhancing this by creating more exchange points, increasing cross-border links, and expanding the number of root server instances and resolvers will significantly strengthen the DNS system.

Four, engaging capacity building programs. Participate in and support programs designed to enhance the skills and knowledge necessary for

UA adoption. Five, and last, foster collaboration. Continue our valuable partnership with the Association of African Universities, AAU, to leverage their expertise and resources in promoting UA.

Conclusion. We recognize that bridging the digital divide through multilingual internet infrastructure requires a concerted and collaborative effort from all stakeholders. AFRALO is committed to advocating for and working closely with ICANN and other key stakeholders to ensure that the internet becomes a truly inclusive and empowering tool for all Africans. By promoting multilingualism, we can unlock the full potential of the digital economy and ensure that no one is left behind in the digital age.

We call upon ICANN, governments, private sector entities, and civil society to join us in this vital endeavor to bridge the digital divide and empower Africa through a multilingual internet system. Together, we can create a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable digital future for Africa. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Abdeljalil. And I would like now to hand the floor to Bram Fudzulani. Bram is a AFRALO vice chair, and he's joining us online. He wasn't able to join us in person for some personal reasons. So, Bram, the floor is yours to open the discussion.

BRAM FUDZULANI:

Can you hear me? If you can hear me, let me know so I can continue. This is Bram Fudzulani.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: We hear you, Bram. Thank you.

BRAM FUDZULANI: Thank you. So, yes, I will just invite the members from the room, but also those that are joining online to make their observations and comments on the statement that has been made. So, the floor is open. I see Professor Aziz, you have your hand up. You can move on.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: So, Aziz, please go ahead. Aziz Hilali, Professor Aziz.

AZIZ HILALI: I would like to say that I am pleasantly surprised by the participation of a large number of people, because we are in Africa. This is great. And I am pleased to see many members of the Board of ICANN org. For those who don't know, we organized this meeting to have all the community from Africa on topics that have been discussed earlier, and we wanted a consultation with the entire community, with all the ALSs. And I would like to say that we should have the number of the statement.

My second comment is that usually when the statement is adopted by the meeting, it is then immediately sent to the Board. Since this is a topic that is of great interest for the African community, I would like to take advantage of the presence of Jonathan, Chair of ALAC. I would like to really underscore that this topic is extremely important for Africans.

And finally, I would like to say something that pertains to a comment I made yesterday regarding to applications for new gTLDs. I have a concern that the results will be the same as for the first round. If I remember correctly, we only had seven applications. So, I would like to request a stronger communication so that people who are interested in Africa would be able to submit their application for these new gTLDs and also for the ASP program. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Aziz. And indeed, we are looking for new domains coming from Africa, new top-level domains coming from Africa in the next round. Jonathan, please go ahead.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

I don't know which one I should use. Thank you, Aziz. And I agree of the really important topic for this region. And the last round had a lot of challenges associated with it, and in particular had challenges associated with its communications and outreach around the world, and particularly to underserved regions and communities that certainly the current plan is designed to address.

I think one of the things that will make the biggest difference is the publication of case studies or business models. The more research that we did as part of the CCT review, we realized that it wasn't so much about the money as it was about not knowing why I would want one of these and could I make money with a TLD. And that hopefully now with

the 1,500 TLDs as a kind of test subjects, we have some ability to go back and look and say, here's--

Like .cat, for Catalonia, for example, is an excellent example of a community TLD that has thrived, and yet there are some others that did not. And how do we figure out what was different between them? So, I know that ICANN org is working hard on some of these materials to really help make the case for applying for a new string, and that in conjunction with a far superior communications plan, we hope that that will lead to more success. So, there's sort of two phases.

I mean, last time there was not enough applications, and then there weren't very many successful ones. So, we have to deal with both of those issues. And so hopefully the outreach program and the case studies and such will help with more applications. And then as we've all been involved in the idea of incubators and things like that, in terms of finding help for people to get through the application process, that needed a lot of improvement as well. And I think we're making strides on making that program, the pro bono program, more realistic in its design than it was in 2012 as well.

So, I think it's still a big lift, as we say, to accomplish that. Because when a community is facing insufficient internet infrastructure, the last thing they're thinking about is, why don't I start running a new top-level domain, right? And so, these things are all hand in hand. But I think that there's some good plans in place. And I think the At-Large community is going to play a big role in helping to put this program in front of the right people.

BRAM FUDZULANI: Thank you, Jonathan, for those remarks. I will just read out, there's a comment from Chokri online, and I think this goes to the penholders, as well as the drafting team. He's pointing out the earlier comment from Pierre, that some of the recommendations that have been mentioned in the document are already covered or they're currently covered by ICANN through some programs. So, the question is, did the statement take into account those existing programs. Maybe, Mutegeki, you want to take that?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: So maybe I could comment quickly and then give it to Mutegeki Cliff. So indeed, some of those topics are already being covered and taken care of by ICANN now. But also, we are looking also for the role of the community and the role of AFRALO. And how can the community actually engage with ICANN org in order to further those goals, in order to implement and advance those topics? Mutegeki?

MUTEGEKI CLIFF AGABA: Thank you so much. I think we need to strengthen what has already been done so far, because there's quite a lot that needs to be done. So, I think it's a good opportunity for us to explore these recommendations more, so that we can have a stronger internet. Thank you.

BRAM FUDZULANI: Go ahead, Hadia. Sorry for that.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: No, please go ahead.

BRAM FUDZULANI: No. I was going to say that I don't see any hands online. Perhaps maybe there's a few interventions that need to come from the room. So please, anyone who wants to comment on the statements, some of the questions, now is the time. But I don't see any hands in the room. So maybe Hadia can help me with checking the status in the room and if anyone wants to come on the mic, please.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Okay. Thank you. So, we have two hands in the room. We have Yaovi and then we have Aziz. I don't know if this is an old hand. And then I also have my hand up.

YAOVI ATOHOUN: Thank you, Hadia. Yaovi Atohoun speaking. I think it's a very good document. I have a small comment. The third recommendation, we can read somewhere the number of root server instances in the third recommendation, which is fine. But in the second one, the second recommendation, we can read the number of root instances and servers. I think you wanted to say what you have in three.

So, my proposal is the number of root server instances in the second recommendation. If not that, you may clarify. So, I think you want to mean the same thing. You mentioned the number of root instances and

servers. So, this is what you have in the recommendation two. But what you have in the recommendation root server instances, what is good. So, I mean, you want to say the same thing. So, the second recommendation, we take the same expression and put it in the second one. Thank you so much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

If I may take the floor. So yes, indeed, and this is noted. So, we will modify the statement accordingly. And I must say that those recommendations, this particular recommendation came out of one of the roundtable discussions that happened on Monday. And as I recall, maybe also it came precisely from you, Yaovi. So, thank you also for being, and others, of course. So, I am not seeing any hands in the room. Bram, the floor is yours.

BRAM FUDZULANI:

Thank you, Hadia. Bram for the recommendation. And if there are no more interventions to the statements, I yield the rest of the time back to Hadia. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Okay. Thank you. So, we have one hand here in the room from Natalia Filina. Natalia, please go ahead.

NATALIA FILINA:

Thank you very much, Hadia. My name is Natalia Filina. I am Secretary of EURALO. And I would like to say that it is a great honor for us to

attend this meeting and to be with you and to work with you. And on behalf of EURALO, I would love to express my appreciation to my African colleagues for absolute support and good collaboration, a way to work together, to exchange ideas and approaches for the work.

And we have a lot to learn from you and your approach to amazing structure at work and working in collaboration manner. And I may say that this meeting, as in other ICANN meetings, is a great opportunity to meet people, not during the session only, and to exchange and to know about many project initiatives. And this project usually relates, but even more about digitalization and often go a little bit further than ICANN topics only. And I would love to say that we are from a huge, not huge, big European region, would love to support you in any ways. We can do the best for our work together. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Natalia. And you have great support in the room. So, thank you again. So, Aziz did point out that we did address similar topics in the past. However, this is different because this is addressing the topic at a bigger scale and at a higher level. So, before we used to address only IDNs alone, or the topic of internationalized domain names as a standalone topic, or the topic of Universal Acceptance as a standalone topic. But today we are actually looking at the entire ecosystem, and not as a standalone topic.

So, I guess this is one of the main differences between this statement and previous statements. Another difference also, I think that in this statement, because we had two roundtable discussions related to the

statement, we came up with more precise recommendations, like the one in relation with the partnering with the Association of African Universities. And this is because we had someone from the Association of African Universities actually on the panel and discussing with us the issue. Also, we have more precise recommendations, like the one about legislative capacity. And again, this is because we had panelists that were in the area of legislation and could actually speak to this. So those are all precise in different recommendations that we have not come up before with.

And again, it is important now, now we realize that in order to address the topic of IDNs and Universal Acceptance, we need to address all the ecosystem. So, it's not enough to just say, Universal Acceptance and the acceptance of domain names and email addresses. It's not enough to only address the topic of internationalized domain names, but it's the entire ecosystem which can make this succeed. We don't have any hands in the room. There is one, and I can't see the name, but please introduce yourself. Yeah, Hannah, please introduce yourself.

HANNAH FRANK:

Hannah Frank for the record. Thank you so much. I am very thrilled to see how Africa community enhance all the ICANN topics. In this sense, I want to highlight all the Nextgen representations of Africa. They are in their 20s and they brought to ICANN new and fresh ideas in order to tackle all the African issues related to DNS, digital divide, digital fragmentation. And it will be a good idea, I don't know, to let them to make their presentation in order to spread these ideas. They are really,

really awesome and they are very, very professional, all of them. Thank you so much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Hannah, for your comment and great support from the floor. Dr. Jabhera, please go ahead.

JABHERA MATOGORO: Thank you so much. This is Dr. Jabhera for the record. I'm just speaking to comment and appreciate for the statement and also adding more voice on the collaboration of the academia in realization of most of these issues that we have mentioned. I have seen much of the effort being put on supporting and working with many other stakeholders within the ICANN community, but I still see that the statement from the AFRALO is actual on time, where much of the emphasis has been put in on how could academia contribute in the realization of most of the issues that has been mentioned. So, this is one of the very important comments that need to be taken on board. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Dr. Jabhera. So far, we have only one modification to the statement, and this is in relation to the second recommendation and adjusting the third line to read increase the number of root server instances. Again, the statement is available. It's linked on the agenda. You can click on it, read it, and if you have any suggestions, additions, or modifications, please share them now. So, seeing no hands up in the Zoom room-- We have Sarmad. Sarmad, please go ahead.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you, Hadia. So, I was actually wondering if there is need to focus, I guess, specific capacity building efforts for the DNS-related industry or part of industry which helps, for example, host domain names. So, more like hosting providers, ISPs, beyond just the, I guess, registries and registrars. I see there's a reference to the DNS ecosystem, but just wondering whether there is need for capacity, specifically capacity development in that area. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you so much, Sarmad, for your suggestions. So where do you suggest this to be added? Is it in recommendation number four, engage in capacity building programs? Where do you suggest this to go?

SARMAD HUSSEIN: Yes, I think perhaps in the capacity building area, there is some reference to DNS industry, but in the last bullet, but it's more to advocate and promote, rather than clearly building training or capacity development. So maybe more directly, I guess, not just for-- So, if you look at the first bullet, it's more focused on content creators and internet users, but there may actually be some opportunity to create capacity for the hosting providers, ISPs and others who are, I guess, relevant as far as deploying domain names or hosting domain names is concerned. Thanks.

HADIA ELMINIAMI: So, your suggestion under number three, capacity building and education, the bullet number one, two, three, the fifth bullet, instead of saying advocate and promote, because we already said that under the promotion and support part, we can say building capacity and skills across Africa by engaging-- Yes, this bullet. And if we can scroll a little bit down the fifth bullet. So, instead of advocate and promote, we would say building capacity and skills across Africa by engaging all stakeholders, including governments, businesses, the technical community. And then the DNS industry, this is where you want us to also elaborate more, right? To spell out internet service providers, to spell out hosting domain names, right?

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Hosting providers, yes.

HADIA ELMINIAMI: So, we can say, for example, DNS industry, including internet service providers and hosting providers.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Yes, maybe something like that, and focus more directly on training instead of just advocating. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAMI: Yes, so instead of advocate and promote, that would be building capacity and skills, because this entire part is speaking to capacity building and education, and actually promotion and advocating is

mentioned in other bullets. So, we would just remove advocate and promote, and put instead building capacity and skills, and then also elaborate more on the DNS industry part in order to spell out internet service providers and host providers. Would that be good?

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Sure, that works. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you. Any other suggestions? So, we have one more comment from Yazid, and then I will hand the floor to Abdeljalil Bachar Bong, AFRALO's secretary, in order to thank and acknowledge all penholders.

YAZID AKANHO: Thank you, Chair. This is Yazid from Technical Engagement. First of all, thanks for the statement. We really appreciate it. And you have touched so many interesting points. But I would like to emphasize on the capacity building and the capacity development. And coming from the technical engagement, we have been doing a lot of effort in the region, but something that we also notice is at two levels.

The first one is, of course, that ICANN cannot be everywhere. We are two resources of technical engagement covering 75 countries. So, we also need to find a sort of balance, right? And this is why I would like to advocate for programs such as Train the Trainers, for instance, whereby ICANN comes in and build or enhance the capacity for group of peoples

that then continue the efforts on the ground. We would really like to see this become a success.

And I do personally think, and this is, I think, the spirit of the whole technical engagement team, that we do see many more of those Train the Trainers programs being run, right, by different ALSs. So, this is really something that I would like to see also emphasized in the document. We are always available. I gave two presentations on Monday and yesterday. And of course, we do have our octo@icann.org available to receive any kind of capacity development and capacity building request. We also have our GSEs that are in forefront of engaging with the different stakeholders. So do not hesitate to contact us and we will be more than happy. But at the same time, we cannot alone from ICANN do the work which is requested. Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Yazid. And I must say now that the queue is closed. We will take one final comment from Pastor Peters and then I will give the floor to Abdeljalil.

PASTOR PETERS OSAWARU OMORAGBON: Pastor Peters for the record. I just want to respectfully disagree with the last speaker. In the sense that I think it would be wise for us to make demands, requests, and let ICANN tell us what they are able to fund or not to fund. I find it extremely uncomfortable when issues like this are discussed and we are the ones that end up trying to

throw the spanner in the ways of whatever program or progress we want to make. So, to me, I will still say that until we make our demands known to ICANN, ICANN tells us what they are able to do. I think that will be more comfortable with me. Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Pastor Peters. However, I do think that we can take the part that Yazid mentioned about Train the Trainer. I think this is important and we can actually spell it out also in our statement. This is not what you were talking about, right? Okay. Thank you. Now, Abdeljalil, AFRALO secretary, the floor is yours.

ABDELJALIL BACHAR BONG:

Thank you very much, Hadia. Abdeljalil speaking. I wanted to deeply thank everyone in the drafting team. They were the penholders who worked on drafting it. There's Cliff who's here, Levi, Carson, Ernest, Umar, Rachad, Remmy, Dave, Kariku, Herve, Raymond, Mustafa, Peter, Pastor, Hadia, and everyone else who was a part of this work. We would like to remind the community that we need you to stay active. This declaration, this statement is common to us also. If you need to communicate with us, we're always open. Our secretariat is always open. This is your house, so the door is always open here. Thank you, Hadia.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much. Thank you to everyone who has been with us today, whether in person or online. Thank you, Bram, for joining us

despite the situation that you're in now. And I would like also to thank our interpreters. Thank you so much for staying with us. Thank you to ICANN org and staff. And I hand it back to staff to close the session.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]