
ICANN81 | AGM – Africa Space
Monday, November 11, 2024 – 13:15 to 14:30 TRT

JUNE OKAL:

Hello and welcome to ICANN 81, the Africa Space session. My name is June Okal and I am the participation manager for this session.

Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN expected standards of behaviour and ICANN community anti-harassment policy.

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 the room or on Zoom. When called upon, unmute your microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record, the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English, and speak at a reasonable pace.

All are welcome to use the chat. Please note that private chats are only possible among panelists in the Zoom format. Any message sent by a panelist or a standard attendee to any other standard attendee will also be sent by the session's hosts, the co-hosts, and other panelists.

I will now hand over the floor to our Vice President for Global Stakeholder Engagement in Africa, Pierre Dandjinou, to make some opening remarks.

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PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you, June, and very good morning to everyone. I'm Pierre Dandjinou, Vice President in charge of Stakeholder Engagement, specifically in charge of Africa at ICANN. Thanks very much for coming to this meeting.

Of course, as you know, this is the time of the year that we are happy to report back to you on what we've been doing in terms of engagement in Africa, and also hearing from you, you know, what works and what didn't really work. So I'm very happy to be around with my colleagues.

We are also kind of happy to welcome our good friend, CEO of Smart Africa, who is really our honored guest at this, who will be having a few remarks for you. And also, we do have one of our board members, who actually squeezed out from a very important meeting there, so we'll be providing her at least with a few minutes, because she really wanted to come and meet you.

As far as what we've been doing in Africa is concerned, we do have what we call the Africa Strategy. It's quite important to understand that this is a kind of binding agreement, you know, between you and us. So we have this, what we call the Africa Strategy, where some of the things we should be doing, you know, are embodied, and that's also what you guys, you know, instructed us a few times ago to be doing.

So we do have a few slides that really quickly introduce all of this. One or two things to notice is that the team has been working on kind of a two-pronged approach. The plan, as I said, with a few activities that are lined up there, but we also started this new project, which is called Coalition for Digital Africa, which is quite important for us. And, of

course, one of the priority messaging we are also having here is the next round, you know, of the gTLD program, which comes with two other programs—ASP will be, you know, talking more on that.

Quickly, I guess I would like to pause here because we need to make sure that Catherine speaks to you, so I'll hand over to Catherine quickly so that she goes back to her meeting. Catherine, please.

CATHERINE ADEYA:

Thank you very much, Pierre, and honestly, I really do apologize because this meeting is clashing with something very critical where I have to be. But I told Pierre there is no way there can be an Africa Space, and I sit as a board member in ICANN, and I don't turn up.

But also, I feel so honored to be sharing this space with colleagues, as Pierre has talked about Coalition for Digital Africa, Smart Africa—it's an honor to be sharing this space with you, with the CEO, Lacina Koné, my good friend. And most of all, I feel so honored that we even have Rodrigo here, and after he's won the awards. I think it's such an honor for Africa. In fact, I was waiting in the morning to hear ululations, and I didn't hear them from Africa, the unique African.

Anyway, just going back, I think the important thing that I wanted to say on behalf of the board is the board's commitment and even recognizing Africa's digital transformation, and in supporting the region. When we talk of Africa—he's talked of Coalition for Digital Africa—I think we keep thinking of the opportunities in Africa's peculiarities, which we talk about every time. Even if you came for the last ICANN meeting, we kept talking about the uniqueness of languages. We are talking about 50-

plus countries. Let's keep thinking about those statistics: 20,000-plus languages, 60% of the population under 24 years. I come from Kenya. You saw the Gen Z thing in Kenya. We cannot afford to ignore it.

But here in ICANN, we are talking about the next round that offers Africa businesses. What are the opportunities? We are talking about the commitment to inclusivity, and what a term that sometimes people say is a very heavy terminology but very important, and that's multi-stakeholderism.

So as a board, we remain steadfast in our commitment to elevating global perspectives in ICANN. We want to ensure that African perspectives are brought to the fore because Africa is a critical piece of the Internet governance puzzle.

I hope most of you have read our draft strategic plan for 2026 to 2030. If you haven't, please engage with it, and I'm sure there will be sessions where you're going to see more. But as the board continues to work on this, I'm actually hoping on behalf of the board to hear more of the Africa voices and comments even to this strategic plan. It contains four strategic objectives, each accompanied by strategic goals, and each has got indicators. Please look at them. Please.

As for sitting as a board member there, I have an oversight role. So if the voices come through, I can say as much as I'm very passionate about Africa, I can't fight an agenda that has to be fought also from the other side. So engage with the draft strategic plan. Make sure your voices are heard. And thank you very much again, Pierre. I think those were just my initial comments, and you're going to see me around. I'm normally

a very friendly face. If you don't see me smiling, remind me that I said that. So on behalf of the board, welcome.

PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you very much, Catherine. Now it's my great honor to have Director-General and CEO of Smart Africa, and I think this is his first kind of Africa Space meeting, so it's an honor for us and a pleasure also to listen to him and listen to the good work Smart Africa is doing on the continent. So, please, CEO, thank you for this.

LACINA KONÉ:

Thank you very much, my brother Pierre, the Coalition for Digital Africa chair, the leadership of ICANN, Africa ICANN members, all of you partners of international organizations, good afternoon to you all. Allow me first to express my gratitude for this invitation. Over the past two days, we have had the opportunity to exchange on the current landscape of Internet governance in Africa, and it's my great pleasure here to share with you some of our initiatives and advocate for a collaborative effort to strengthen Internet governance capacity for our governments and legislators on our continent. The Smart Africa Alliance has always been committed to promoting digital Africa towards a single digital market by 2030.

We're working right now on about 34 different flagships on topics particularly in terms of cloud, cloud architecture, and resilience in Africa. But I'm confident that the efforts of our coalition are essential as they address critical dimensions of Internet governance, particularly domain name management.

In our peer exchange yesterday, we got to understand that African ccTLDs are the least registered at about 3% when compared to the rest of the world. Can you imagine the amount of potential revenues governments are losing by not promoting ccTLDs? If you look at the market growth in Africa, for example, the current situation that you all know, maybe half a dozen operators on the continent are generating about \$80 billion revenue a year. Those \$80 billion infrastructure IP addresses generated \$836 billion in transaction value in terms of mobile money. That's a huge opportunity.

But let's be mindful of the potentials Africa has, but potential has never been an index of development anywhere. It's an opportunity we need to grab. So beyond the potential revenues, it's also about creating digital doorways into our countries while ensuring digital sovereignty. But we are missing these.

To address existing challenges, our participation in the coalition is very clear: to contribute to consolidating and strengthening joint initiatives for internet infrastructure development and capacity building in the internet governance sphere. This includes establishing impactful joint actions in response to the continent's current challenges. This approach perfectly aligns with the current dynamic of conclusions surrounding the Global Digital Impact, which was actually enacted in New York, discussions of which have been initiated by the UN Secretary over the past four years.

Dear participants, during the last session of Africa Space held last June in Kigali on the sidelines of ICANN 80, we reaffirmed our commitment to the coalition and pledged to strengthen this partnership through

concrete action. This commitment became a reality yesterday with a session on the process and regulatory framework surrounding country code top-level domains, which is nominated as the ccTLDs. This session was aimed at government officials on our continent, legislators, and the support of the coalition is of paramount importance.

Participants gained insight into best practices, regulatory considerations, and effective ccTLD management to support the digital landscape of their respective countries. It was a success yesterday with the participation of over 30 countries, around 15 international organizations, and 10 experts.

Beyond this initiative, Smart Africa has engaged in several areas of internet governance over the past few years. In this regard, I would like to inform you that we have initiated actions to establish capacity building and peer learning initiatives at various internet governance events across the continent, and this will continue. We will carry out these actions with a strong involvement from government stakeholders who are essential to achieving our goals of creating a single digital African market and sovereign governance.

Ladies and gentlemen, heads of the delegations from the member organizations of the coalition, the official launch of the working group on the sidelines of ICANN 80 sessions, which currently comprises over 30 members at Smart Africa, has allowed us to define the roadmap for establishing a continental blueprint on internet governance, which will help, of course, define guidelines and stimulate the dynamics of implementing concrete action. Your commitment to accompany the

process of developing this blueprint is highly anticipated within the framework of the Coalition for Digital Africa.

This is also the place for me to thank ICANN for its ongoing support for this effort, which will soon materialize with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our two organizations—I believe it's going to happen tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are convinced that these concrete efforts will enable African governments to effectively address their specific challenges and engage more meaningfully in the global landscape of internet governance. By uniting our efforts, we can certainly create an environment which is conducive to innovation, to collaborations, and the implementations of inclusive and sustainable digital policies. Your support and collaboration will be essential to achieving these common objectives. Indeed, it is through collaborative work that we can build a robust infrastructure, enhance digital skills, ensure equitable access to technology for all our citizens.

Thank you for your attention and continued support. Together, let us work to build a resilient, innovative digital future for Africa where each country can leverage the opportunities offered by digital technology to promote its economic and social development. Thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you very much, CEO of Smart Africa, for these very, I would say, insightful words. And let me also tell you that we are so happy to have you as a partner under the CDA. And also happen to be participating in the workshop you organized yesterday. It was quite interesting because

you were tackling a very big issue in Africa, which is the ccTLDs management, and we had very interesting exchanges there. So thanks so much for that.

Well, at this, we are supposed to be hearing from Sally Costerton, who is our CEO, interim CEO for ICANN. And you also understand that she also has been very stuck into a very kind of busy agenda even today, and she cannot really escape from these meetings. She just told me that she has sent her warm greetings to you all. She will be meeting with you anyway at the reception tonight. And of course, she is also happy to also announce that we are going to have the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Smart Africa tomorrow. So she definitely will be with you and with all of you.

She also wanted me to ascertain that, of course, ICANN takes it quite seriously to contribute to the digital economy in Africa, and especially doing a few things, of course, strengthening the DNS infrastructure in Africa, making sure that Africa also contributes and participates in ICANN and especially for the ICANN's ongoing development of the plan, of our strategy plan, that you should also contribute to this. So these are some of the messages she wanted me to bring to you.

So ICANN support is there and we try to do as much as we can, especially with this partnership that we are really launching with our other partners. So be aware of her, but you'll be seeing her a lot. Now with that, maybe I need to hand over to June for the rest of our agenda, yeah?

Okay, June says I should keep now talking. Okay, so let me provide a quick update on CDA and then the rest of the agenda, you know. But I just wanted to insist that the agenda is composed of the updating you, but also quite important aspects, you know, of what we are doing at ICANN that we would like to be hearing. And also we want you also to have your expression. One of them is this new gTLD, and especially the applicants, you know, supporting this. So it's quite important that we hear from you, but that's going to come.

So as far as CDA is concerned, it was launched almost a year ago. Currently, we do have a few figures there for you. 14 partnerships that we were able to establish. We do have key initiatives, you know, eight of them, flagship sort of initiative. We are going to sign them soon. These activities are already spread within 34, you know, African countries. And of course, in terms of population. But that basically shows you what we've been doing in terms of figures right now.

When it comes to CDA, which is Coalition for Digital Africa, we do have three sort of areas that we are working on. First one is the robust DNS infrastructure. Basically, that's what ICANN does. We also thought that when you think about connectivity in Africa, you have to make it meaningful connectivity, which exactly means it's not just about accessing and communicating. It's also about doing a few things, which boils down to main development, you know, part of it. We'll come back on that. And also capacity development is central.

In terms of robust DNS infrastructure, we've been kind of, you know, deploying what we call DNS roadshows, DNSSEC being that program that makes it possible for ccTLDs to sign their zone file, and of course

securing the whole DNS infrastructure in the country. Currently, we are in places like Nigeria, Cameroon, Cape Verde. We are working to do the signing of the zone file. And the support also of what we call the IMRS, the ICANN managed road server, the L. That's probably you all know about. We can provide those freely. So we do have a project on those. The IMRS, what it does basically is about kind of latency providing, I would say, speed of resiliency or whatever, resolve of your queries. It's important that you do have copies of the road server, not at home, but at least in your region.

Now, if I will go to the meaningful connectivity. One of the key things that we are doing here is we collaborated with the Association of African Universities to do a few things. Basically, it's about what you call universal acceptance, UA. And we found out a few things that most systems needed to be made compliant with universal acceptance. We are addressing those systems in 400 universities and the research centers in Africa. Well, holding hands in such a way that at least most of the universities do have UA compliant systems. But one thing that we want really to generate and which kind of, I would say, important was to make sure that educational institutions in Africa do have a curricula on UA modules. I mean, when we go to the universities or the research centers and talk about UA and why we should be compliant with it, well, most of the time, what we receive as answers, we didn't know at all about those things. So it's important that we keep on.

And one of the projects we are also having is make sure that most people, most countries sort of develop the language script so that they are able to be also on the Internet. It's quite important. Right now,

we've achieved this one in Ethiopia with the [Al Marik.] We would like more and more countries to be involved in that because what it takes here is that it's about inclusiveness, you know. That people that might not be conversant in both English or French in other languages in Africa be also able to access the Internet in their own languages, you know. The opportunities are there. We do have the technology to do this, so now it's up to all of us to see which countries are interested and how much of the work we have to do to be able to have those scripts.

And the central area here is the capacity development. A project that we launched there is about the ccTLDs [inaudible] capacity. And for that, we have a few partners assisting here, and I would like to really thank them because we did have a very interesting workshop with them, not just about technical matters but also some of the marketing issues and also security. So we are very happy with that one.

In terms of capacity development, a very major project also is about how you do kind of our I won't say educate, but this opens up those things to decision makers, to your governments. So we do have sessions with the GAC in collaboration with Smart Africa, of course, and a workshop for African officials in collaboration with Smart Africa as well. I mean, this happened yesterday. So we do have a set of those kind of targeted workshops to governments and because it's about decision-making. So this is basically what, maybe I should just cite a few of those eight projects.

This is the Africa ccTLD program. But I'm not going to, no, Lucky will be talking, but not now. I would like you guys to list the eight flagship projects that we have. Quickly before I hand over to Lucky. Of course,

one of those projects that we did for us was impactful, I would say, is when we launched what we call the IMRS cluster in Kenya. What we did there was to kind of set up within one of the data centers there, what we call a cluster of servers, whereby once we just installed this cluster, the traffic, because it's about the traffic that is outgoing, the traffic definitely part of it also, I mean, close to 30 to 35 of it, was then being kind of handled by the cluster in Kenya. But normally these were traffic that were going up north and back to Africa. So that really shows that it can make a difference to have those clusters. A second one we did have was in Egypt as well, and hopefully we might be sending this to other places in Africa. It is important to know, but it is about the cluster. You also need to have your single one. Can be in your countries. Even in Africa, a few places have three to four of those single copies. It's quite important. So we are open to that. Right now, we do have 8 to 10 countries that have L root. We want to establish more of them because of what it does.

The other initiative also I would like to flag quickly here before I stop. This is the, we already spoke about the DNSSEC Roadshow, the IMRS, universal acceptance in higher education institutions. The internet exchange points, which are also quite important. We are partnering with ISOC to deploy a few of those internet exchange points in Africa. And it's quite important to have them, at least locally. You can see the difference, especially when you do have so many internet cuts, that can really assist. And of course, I mentioned the capacity development with the government and lawmakers as well. These are what we might call our flagship initiatives so far. But it's only after just one year of operation, and we hope to have more of them in the coming financial

year. So with that, many other things to talk about, especially our broad strategy plan. Then I would like to not open up the floor at this stage, but let our good friend Lucky come in with a few ideas he has. So Lucky, I think the floor is yours at this point.

LUCKY MASILELA:

Thank you, Pierre, my good friend. Good afternoon all. What I want to share with you today is a concept of how we can get the rest of the African continent to participate in the next round. This is informed by the history of 2014, when the round of gTLDs was launched. We saw how many countries participated on the continent, and also we saw how many names are still active on the continent.

And the other thing was that we were looking at what are the inhibitors, what are these things that are making it difficult and impossible for Africa to participate in the gTLD space. And then these are some of the things that I just want to share with you and open up discussion and a tunnel for us to begin to engage. And you can talk to us, and we have our team here across whom we have successfully run one of the largest gTLDs on the continent.

And for your information, .Africa is a geographic name. I think it's the fourth largest on the world, after world, after Tokyo and New York City. So these are some of the active domains registered with us. These are not all. We have continued the next slide. This is just to show you, to gloat that we have big names that are with .Africa. Go to the next slide again. And these are reserved for defensive purposes, and it's fine. We would like to see more of these companies using these names actively.

Then let's go and look at the real issues now. These are some of the applications of the names that took place in the previous round or the last round. And if you look at this, there is only .Africa, .Capetown, .Durban and .MTN that are active today. All of the other gTLDs that have been applied for from .AfricaMagic, .gotv, .DSTV, .Mzansimagic, .Naspers, etc. have been terminated. They are no longer active and for a number of reasons that they are not active.

And you will see that most of these names that have been terminated were coming from the entertainment industry. It is one of the biggest entertainment entities in South Africa, MultiChoice, who found no need or no use for these names. But it reflects something about the gTLDs and the challenges.

Let's go to the next slide and see another interesting number of stats. Of the four names that are active that are currently administered by us, you will notice that for the first three years, 2014, 2015 and 2016, we have no stats on .Africa. This is because during that period we had litigation. We were busy losing money, we were bleeding money, and we were losing a lot of time. And we started going live in 2017. Today we are sitting with 51,000 names. Now, if you look at the cities, Joburg, Cape Town, Durban, it has been a very seesaw. It's up and down, up and down throughout the time. This is part of the challenges and the beauty of gTLDs. They are not an easy thing. They are seen as premium names. And they are limiting factors. It's your purchasing power.

The DNS market study covered a lot of issues around those challenges. And for us today, it's going to be the evaluation fees. How do we

participate in this game, in this game that's coming in the next few years as a continent? So this is what I think we need to consider.

So this is the proposed business model whereby informed by the successes or the failures of the gTLDs that were registered on the continent. And most of that could be informed by price. That could be informed by the market conditions. And the general GDP in each country that one needs to be growing into.

What I think would be the next possible thing for this next round is that we need to have an applicant who would be the sponsor and this could be a city, could be Kigali, or could be Lagos, or a municipality or a county where Barak comes from, or even a community to raise at 225,000 US dollars and be the applicant for this. And then they would find an operator who preferably should be a local provider. And a back-end provider, a registry service provider, again, preferably a local provider. And those solutions are available. I think those two solutions at the top can be provided in this house. We can have discussions.

The challenge for this is that the RSP must now raise an evaluation fee to be able to go through this evaluation. And if it must be local, it's going to be another steep climb for whoever wants to be an RSP. And then there will be a registrar for that city or that county or that municipality, and that would be on a concept where the applicant would own that and whoever builds will operate and transfer this to the city over a given period of time.

The city then will have end users. Your end users are your rate payers, your consumers, the guys who pay for their lights, who pay for their

utilities. And you would provide them email services to ensure that you provide them with the bills, the monthly bills for their services that they are gaining. And this is also a chance for that municipality or a city to build a website and use it as a platform to communicate with its citizens. And you can report issues, problems around potholes, lights or water leakages. It becomes a service delivery platform in essence, and it's interactive. And you would see big business also will be able to advertise on that platform. A nominal fee would be charged to the end users to have that email service and I'm going to talk about the E-mail service. I believe this will also assist in revenue collection for that city or the municipality. This is what we think would be the best model for this because if you were to try and buy .lagos and try to sell it to the general public, it looks like a difficult climb. And we believe or at least I believe that this model where the sponsor becomes that city, it's more doable and much more achievable. I think on that note, we can look at the next two slides and then I would say thank you. Oh, yes, there is this meeting. If you have time, join us tomorrow at half past five in the room next door. We will be talking our AFRINIC. So for those who feel and have passion for that tomorrow, this is the room next door, half past five. We'll have all the time to talk about AFRINIC. Thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you very much for this proposal I will say. And then of course we might have time to discuss it. So at this point in time I need to inform that we still have 30 minutes. And June, how are you managing this, please? Because usually at Africa space, they have to come here and make sure that we move out of the place because we don't respect it.

So June, please, how are we organizing this? Okay. Yaovi, please, if you can take us quickly through the next part of the agenda, which is the plan. If you may take maybe five minutes to take us through this because we want to hear from the audience, please.

YAOVI ATOHOUN:

Thank you, Pierre. Yaovi is speaking. I hope you can hear me. As we cannot stop the watch, I'll do my best to make it take 10 minutes as per the agenda. This main topic we want to talk about is the Regional Plan for Africa and to mention that this is based on the ICANN Strategy Plan and how we are proposing. So if we move to the next slide, the Africa Strategy as mentioned is now following as usual since the beginning the ICANN Strategy Plan. So currently we are in the process of having this plan for the five next year. So I'm not going to go through what you have on the screen. It's just about the process of this ICANN Strategy Plan. So you have different phases and then if you can move to the next slide, the next after that one. We are at a phase where we have the call for contribution to this plan. It was closed and then because the date was the 17th of September. So I'm sure that most of us in this meeting we have attended some of the meetings or the webinars organized to inform the community, to call the community to contribute to this ICANN Plan as a process where everyone is involved. So we are expecting to have the report in the 19th of November. So after we have this report, we'll have again the board to look at it and then at some point if the poor community as in the process need to say something about that.

Now if you move to the next slide, what we are thinking is that Africa as usual, we also have a regional plan. So we have a regional plan covering five years and we are going with the assumption that the four objectives that are proposed that are in discussion now will be confirmed the four objectives. So these are the objectives you can see on the screen. The first one is to evolve and promote ICANN's multi-stakeholder model to sustain its inclusive internet governance model. So again we think that it is something that the ICANN, the Africa community can contribute to as an objective, to the global objective. So that is what we think.

The second objective also which is organizational excellence. So this is something an objective. We think that the Africa community, Africa can contribute to. The third objective is to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to evolve the internet unique identifier system. That is the third objective we propose to consider. And then the last objective is to strengthen the security of the identifier system. So these are the four objectives. If you remember in the previous regional plan, we had five objectives. But this one we have five objectives. So this presentation will be available for everyone after this session. So what we have done in the past, as you see in the past, we had in the 2012 strategy, Africa strategy, we had the community involved in this work. At some point in 2018 we had a revised version. And then for the last also five year plan currently, which is the one we are using. So the current plan, five year plan will end in June this year. And then we are proposing and we are planning to provide a report of the implementation of this five year plan.

So now what we intend to do, we propose some outcomes. So if you go to the next screen, for example, we take each of these five objectives. Each of these four objectives, we are proposing some outcomes. They are just ideas. We are proposing some outcomes. So I'm not going to go through all these outcomes. I cannot just take the first one of objectives and then which has many goals. So as an example, the goal one is to ensure inclusive stakeholder representation and integrated collaboration. That is the first objective. And then we have goal and sub goals. And then the first one under the goal 1.1 is to integrate new stakeholders into ICANN community group as needed. Now we just put some proposed outcomes as I mentioned. We have some proposed outcomes that will serve as basis for the work of the various contributions. So it's just a proposal. The second one is to enable integration, integrated collaboration among community groups. So what we are expecting as outcome for that one is to have improved synergy among Africa ICANNers and SOACs leading to stronger policy outcome improved and then to have improved integration of fellows and newcomers within ICANN. So this is an example. So this is outcome. So we expect now the group to come with like key indicators and to do more, to bring more to what you are proposing. So this is the template we come with when you see that. If you go to the next slide, just go to goal objective number three for example. Go to objective number three. So we have done the same exercise—objective number three please. We have done the same exercise for all the objective. You can see that slide number 25 for example. Go to objective number three. Exactly. So like in objective number three, we have like 318 facilitated digital inclusion, digital inclusion. So we see 3.1.1 promote the advancement of universal

acceptance and international domain names by empowering stakeholders. So one outcome we see is to have the developers learn the skills during their education and have the new system become your ready-by-design. So this is one outcome, so it's a proposal, and the group can see more of that. The second one is proactively collaborate with relevant and diverse external stakeholders to promote universal acceptance. And then at outcome, we propose to increase your readiness of contracted parties. We have some from Africa. And then to increase your knowledge, education, including UA days and for people in the UA session this morning, you see that we have a lot of proposal from Africa for UA day. And then we hope to see again, more contribution for Africa. So I can see that this is in line of what is happening in the country and what we can expect.

If you go to the last one, for some of them, which is the objective number four, if you go to objective number four, we see also strengthen partnership with relevant stakeholders to reinforce the shared responsibility of ensuring secure and stable Internet's unique and diverse system. So there are also, if I take the 4.143, we mention increased adoption of DNS operation and security best practices at the level of network operators in Africa. Again, you see in Africa, we have been working the past year very closely, we have two teams supporting the continent. We have the global engagement team. And then we have also our team from OCTO. So we are working closely for engagement. There's two teams. So you see we have been doing many, many improvements when we talk about DNS operation. And also we see that the Coalition for Digital Africa we just talked about is also contributing to this regional plan. So if you go to the next slide again, what we did is

that we are just proposing ideas for that one. And then in the next slide, what I want to share in the next slide is that we are proposing like a timeline. We are proposing a timeline because we don't have too much time left. So today we are discussing this as an initial discussion. So we'll have these documents which will contribute. We think that the time is too short to go through everything.

In November, the vice president will announce that we are proposing a working group as in the past for the 2012 strategy. We have the Africa strategy working group. And then after that 2018, we had a revised version also with the contribution from the community. So we are thinking about a group that will also help because this is what we have. We are just a few pages. So we need more in that, more detail, and more contribution. So we think that between January and now in January, after we have this group, this group the draft plan will be presented in March. That is the expectation, that in March we'll have a draft plan for Africa, a regional plan for the next five years to be presented in March. And then between March and April, we can have the community input because we are thinking about a small group. But between March and April, so we'll have the input from the whole community. That by May 2025, we have a full document which will serve our activities from first of July next year.

So before I stop, we have just an idea about what we are thinking. If you see in the next slide, we think that because we cannot have everyone in this group, we have leaders in the SOACs, supporting organizations and advisory committees. So we think by default, we can have one member, one African leader from each SOAC and from each AC. So this is a

proposal. And then we have also some very active groups supporting Africa, working in Africa. So just a list we put there, it may be not complete. So we have some lists there. And we think that this organization can contribute to this group we are thinking about. So this small group we are thinking about can come out with a document, as we mentioned on the proposal timeline. So I want to stop there because we have just a few minutes left. So we have a lot of talk. And as Pierre mentioned, it is important that your participation online or in the room, you also have time. We are sorry that we cannot go through the detail of this plan. But as we mentioned, it should be online today for you to help you. So Pierre, I want to stop there so that we open the floor. Thank you. And also on this one.

PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you, Yaovi, for this presentation. Especially on the preparation of the development of the African regional plan. Thank you for that. So I will say we kind of quickly provided an update on CDA. We also kind of heard from Lucky, and also we did have this regional plan. Certainly there are questions. Certainly there are observations that you might have, suggestions. Now is your time. So the floor is yours. If you want to eventually have any question, please.

JUNE OKAL:

Thanks, Pierre. And I see a lot of hands up in the room. So we will start with the remote participants. So some comments on the CDA presentation. They said that 34 flagship countries is great. It would be good to have collaboration with follow-ups. Some feedback for Smart

Africa. Malick Alassane says congratulations to the Smart Africa CEO and his team for their visionary work in advancing digital and internet governance in Africa and for their efforts to engage our governments. Dr. Akinbo says using internet governance to develop and execute a roadmap can make it happen. Inclusive policies will enhance execution while considering accessibility measures too. So thank you, CEO of Smart Africa. From Lucky presentation, Dr. Akinbo said indeed he agrees with you. Selling a .lagos would be hard, but creating content around it with a surcharge would be great. Lawrence agrees. He says insightful presentation, Lucky, on how we can witness some remarkable success as Africans during the next rounds. I saw some hands in the room. I know our chair, AFRALO, had her hand up earlier. So Hadia and then [inaudible]. I also see Wisdom and I see our CEO from [Zadna.] So we will proceed in that order.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much. And congratulations to all of you for all the hard work that you've been doing. And my question is actually to Lucky and the business model that you have presented. And it looks, of course, like a promising business model. And my question to you, do you think you could make use of the applicant support program? And if not, what are the challenges in making use of the applicant support program? And as you know, it starts on the 25th of November, the application submission. Thank you. Or I think around that time. And one more thing, if I could quickly say, and that's not related to what has... It's related to universal acceptance. And I just want to point out that AFRALO UA Day regional strategy event will feature AFRALO members'

UA achievements and activities throughout 2024 with a focus on four key themes. The first is technical adoption, featuring AFRALO members' adoption experiences. The second is sustainable capacity development, featuring the Association of African University universities. The third is DNS local industry, featuring local service providers and hosting providers. And the fourth is public policy, featuring the collaboration with UNESCO. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you very much. So my comment is to the presentation from Yaovi. Thank you very much. And I think it's very commendable, the work you're doing. I would like to register Smart Africa's interest to be part of the small team to work on the regional plan and also to put at your disposal our current working group. We do have a working group on internet governance. Looking at the time that you have to work between now and May, I was thinking it may take too long. So if you will, and if you may, we do have the internet governance working group already set up. I'm sure it's a lot of very similar stakeholders. We are able to put them at your disposal so you can cut off the time of going, you know, those administrative things of creating the working group. And I think this is in the spirit of collaboration. Thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Thank you. Thank you very much for that. And it's well noticed. In fact, as Yaovi was pointing out, it was just kind of preliminary, you know, sort of list. It's not the final one. I'm already hearing a few sort of noises here.

But the question for me was why AFRINIC is not inside that group. But that's not the final group. We are still working on that, please.

WISDOM DONKOR:

My comment is based on human rights. And then this goes to Smart Africa. I've gone to your site. I've read everything. I've listened to you. But then I haven't heard anything about human rights. In our part of the world, Africa, we have a lot of vulnerable people. And then most often, these vulnerable people are found facing one issues or the other. Data breaches, data protection, and all of that. What we're realizing is that the law enforcers don't understand or not aware of what is going on digitally, most of them. The attorneys that we have also in Africa also lack knowledge. So I was expecting to hear a bit of human rights, what your outfit would do to kind of champion that education. I think it's important for us to be able to get most of these law enforcers, then the attorneys, into this space. So that when you're handling any of these digital issues within the judicial environment, they'll be informed of what is going on. They'll be informed of what is going on. Transparently, kind of adjudicate issues on how it should go.

The other one is regard of the IGF. You know, next year will be the review of the WHOIS report. That is 20 years of the IGF. And then there will be a review order to renew that mandate or not. So what is your outfit also doing to help put forward that message so that the United Nations or whoever it is that will be helping renew that mandate, will make sure that that mandate is kind of renewed for IGF to continue. And then I also like to hear about you mentioned you want to collaborate with the IGF. So I want to understand whether you are referring to regional IGF or

national IGF. And if that's the case, then how are you going to [inaudible]? Is it going to be financial support or kind of? I would like to know.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you very much. [inaudible] for the record. Thank you, Masilela, for the presentation. And of course, Yaovi, for the straight overview. I think I'll start with the easiest one. The timelines that were shared of the 15th of November is the end date. I think those are too tight considering the size of the community. So maybe if colleagues from ICANN can reconsider the timelines just to allow those without voices to actually find ways and pathways to share their inputs.

Now, well, according to me, the most difficult one for the past couple of months I've had, I can talk to the next round as an opportunity for inclusivity and so forth. But they inherently have a barrier of entry, which was highlighted by Mr. Masilela, which is the evaluation fees. I know ICANN will be very quick to say no, no, no, we have an applicant support program. But there are no guarantees that if you put your name in the head, whichever formation of collaboration you might come up with, you will actually come out through as a victor or an awardee of the support. Now, that further complicates the situation.

Now, to throw a different curveball altogether, the model that was presented by Mr. Masilela, I think it could work. But again, there's an Achilles heel to it, whereby the RSPs that are accredited by ICANN, I think there's one on the continent, two companies in totality if one counts them. With all of these, is it a realistic outlook for ICANN to say

they are including Africa as a whole? Or is it just flowered English that we throw out there to talk about inclusivity? And this is the question that I'm having.

So I'm not going to throw a problem to yourself and without proposing solutions. Maybe consider re-looking at the applicant support because we know those in the Global South need it the most. Prioritize those within, of course, your process of adjudicating. I will go further to say dedicate slots. If we don't apply as Africans, then we'll lose those slots to those in the Global North. But really be intentional and let's avoid, I think, I would say flowered English again for lack of a better phrase. Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

I'll answer the first question of yours. Human rights, whether you are the oppressor or the oppressed, you first of all have the right for information. To be transformed, you have to be informed. Back in the independence days in Africa, we only used to know the news from the TV for country that had a TV back in the '70s. But now with the cell phone proliferation, everyone has a TV in his hand. So when you say human rights, it is not in our mandate to be enforcing human rights, but it's our mandate to be using the technology ethically and responsibly and to make sure the connectivity is inclusive. So when you talk about different authority governments in terms of freedom of expression and so on, unfortunately, it's completely out of our mandate because we do know one thing. That's the reason we have a capacity building program for decision makers because most, more than 80% of our government members, policy decision makers, they don't know what's the

technology. You assume when they're around the table, they know what are the implications, but in reality they don't know. So we do have a lot of hurdles to go through first in terms of information, dissemination, advocacy on the government side as well as the civil society side. The reason why I'm saying this, the biggest threat today in Africa is not really the use of the technology that we know today. The biggest threat is the AI, that I can have your image doing something which is completely unethical and it's not you. Yes, you manage to bring people inclusively, but how do they use the technology? It takes a lot of advocacy. It takes a lot of training. It takes a lot of capacity building. I hope I answered that question. The second question, IGF, I think my colleague here, they will answer it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Right, thank you. So you spoke about what we are doing in terms of the renewal of the IGF mandate, and I think if you look at the Global Digital Compact, the center of it is inclusion and ensuring that everybody has universal access, which is also at the core of the IGF. We think that maybe the format may change, we don't know, but then we are working to ensure that it's consistent and whatever objective that we set off with the IGF is still consistent and stays the same. In terms of our modus operandi of partnering or working together with the IGF, we do work together with countries on a national level, so I think we recently had something to do with the Ghana one, based on the requests that we receive from countries. We also work together with the regional IGFs as well as the global one. Our support is not directly financial, because Smart Africa is non-profit. What we do is more of technical assistance

through capacity building, and then we work through the governments, if there's a strategy or a policy that has to be done, we come through with consultancies. So that's how we support when we don't give cash or money. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So if you allow me, I just want to add something. Thank you, Wisdom. I think that the case of Wisdom is a special case, I know about it, because he tried to see with Smart Africa how it can work during Ghana IGF Forum this year, but we didn't get something to give in support, but really it was tricky, I think. It was very short, so we didn't get something to make. But I assure him that next year we will try to see how we can start something earlier, of course, because in Smart Africa we have a lot of issues and process, so it could be better, I think, to come earlier and we try to see how we can support you. I apologize for everything. And what [inaudible] is just saying, that the support we made for Ghana, it was the Ghana DNS Forum, so it's just to correct it, but I think it's the same ecosystem. IGF is part of this event as well, I think. Thank you, Wisdom.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. I think coming back to my proposal that I presented here, the time is ticking, and if we really think we want Africa to participate in the next round, we have to have some major changes to the applicant support program. And currently there is a discount that is being discussed for the applicant, but there is no discount that is presented for the back-end providers. We believe that if we are going to have

African back-end providers, your RSPs, we do not need just a discount. We need a waiver on the application fund so that we can have local RSPs being the ones driving the agenda on the continent. And two, we need to think broadly where we can even have one big RSP that we can create that will offer the services across the continent. We do not have to duplicate the services, but we can build one RSP to provide the services. These are some of the things that we need to consider. The time is ticking. I think Bob has been doing a fantastic job trying to create awareness. But the best form of awareness is for us to come up with a program that will enable us to start getting the tire to hit the ground and get an RSP out there and get ourselves ready for 2026. Thank you, Chair.

JUNE OKAL:

Thank you, Lucky. We will have our senior director for the next round program, Bob Ochieng, who's based out of Africa, respond to it and close off the meeting. Thank you. So, thank you,

BOB OCHIENG:

Thank you. It's a loaded question, and obviously, depending on how you look at it, so that's the question from [inaudible]. Is ASP or is applicant support enough? And I know we have very limited time. So, probably just to give context, support itself will be limited to a maximum of 85% of the fees applicable. But at the same time, the support is to a very specific set of entities. So probably even those that are intending to apply might not be in that set of categories.

So you are looking at either if you're an NGO, an IGO, a small and medium enterprise, or an indigenous group. So this is the category of

entities that are targeted for support. And you do acknowledge that probably we have applications or potential applicants that are neither of those categories. I think that on one hand, it's really a question of have we recognized the DNS industry or the names industry and its potential. Because today it is a huge barrier, the fees that have been proposed, obviously. But it is because of the performance of the industry so far. Because if you compare performances from other markets, they might have a different opinion on how affordable or not the fees is. So I think as a region, there's also the element of probably investing more and supporting further the ecosystem to actually realize its potential. Because indeed, we have barely scratched the surface.

As CEO Smart Africa just indicated, I think we are doing 3% in terms of registrations if you look at ccTLDs. That can mean we have a huge potential or a very long way to go. So it's a market issue that needs to be addressed, and that definitely needs collaboration and support, including from businesses and establishments and governments in Africa.

So unfortunately, this is what the community has proposed so far that ICANN is implementing. That support will be limited to up to a maximum of 85%, but also further limited to a very narrow group of entities, which are either NGOs, IGOs, small medium enterprises, or indigenous groups. So I think if Africa and its institutions and governments could collaborate further, it is possible to unlock funding to potential applicants to actually meet. And I think this is what Lucky is also proposing.

So happy to answer specifics in the corridors, please feel free, but I'll leave that in the interest of time. Thank you very much.

JUNE OKAL:

The session is now closed. Thank you so much to our language services interpretation team and MTS.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]