
ICANN81 | AGM – Joint Session: ICANN Board and SSAC
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FRANCO CARRASCO: Hello and welcome, everybody. My name is Franco Carrasco and I am the participation manager for this session. Welcome to the Joint Session between the ICANN Board and the Security and Stability Advisory Committee. Please note that this session is being recorded and follows the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. Interpretation today for this session will include English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic.

Please remember to state your name for the record and the language that you will speak if speaking a language other than English. Please also remember to speak at a reasonable pace. The discussion today is between the ICANN Board and the SSAC only. Therefore, we will not be taking questions from the audience. Having said that, I will now hand the floor over to the ICANN Board Chair, Tripti Sinha.

TRIPTI SINHA: Thank you, Franco. Welcome everyone to the bilateral meeting between the Board and SSAC. This is, I believe, the last bilat meeting for the Board. I know it's Wednesday and everyone's had lots of meetings thus far and exhausted, but I'm hoping this will be a candid

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exchange of ideas and opinions and other items. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Jim Galvin, who's going to chair the meeting. Jim?

JAMES GALVIN:

Thank you, Tripti. Hello and welcome to everyone. During the AGM week, this is one of my favorite meetings because, as a Board member and as SSAC's liaison to the Board, I'm generally very conflicted and can't attend any SSAC meetings. But this time, I don't have to make that choice, so that's a good thing, and I appreciate that. We have a pretty full agenda. I think we'll just jump right in here and get to what we're going to talk about today.

As a reminder, even the remote SSAC members, if you put your hand up in the Zoom room, we'll seek to include you in any discussion that's going on. Of course, SSAC members and Board members in the audience, if you want to contribute, you have something to say, please raise your hand. We do have a roaming microphone that we can bring to you, and as soon as you're recognized, you can speak. With that, let's jump right first to the Board question to SSAC, which was what would the SSAC suggest as key issues for the incoming CEO? And let me look to Ram, please, to take that up.

RAM MOHAN:

Thank you. And Board members here on the stage, as well as in the audience, thank you for having us. Tripti, this may be the last bilateral meeting, but it'll be the best though. To the question in front of us, we had a discussion inside of the SSAC and we really categorized our

comments into three areas. The first is culture; the second is effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy; the third is stewardship. Those really are the key issues for the incoming CEO.

Let me unpack that just a little bit more. On culture, we think there is a culture change that needs to be instituted. We want a more welcoming and safe environment, especially for women. We want a community where people feel more collaborative with each other. And we want the CEO to focus on processes that do not work well. A proposal that we have is that ICANN org, but the CEO, ought to think about ICANN taking principled stands on key issues, even if they are risky or controversial, consult with the community on those principled stands but taking an approach of the risk appetite is very low should not be the guiding principle if the issue itself is essential and important for the internet and for the community that ICANN serves. Those are some of the comments on culture. I think there is a strong desire to make sure that the culture focuses on a welcoming and safe environment for women inside of the meetings, outside of the meetings, when we work together.

The second area is effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy. We really think that focus has to go on streamlining ICANN org's bureaucracy, and also a strong focus to shift from efforts to outcomes. It's striking how many sessions from the SSAC we listen to where what ICANN says or its achievements are based on the number of people who attend, the number of meetings that were held, the number of hours that were spent. These are good metrics. It's not that those metrics are unimportant, but what has to stand behind that is what are the outcomes? Where did we get to? So that's important.

One of our SSAC members, for instance, shared with us that one of the policy development processes he was working on has so far spent 6,000 person hours on building a policy on transfers. It's not done yet. That's astonishing.

The other thing on effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy is don't just try to be better at what you're doing at ICANN. Be bold and stop doing things that are just not appropriate, that are not the right thing to do. Revamp how things are done. So, be bold. Don't think that you should just continue doing something just because it has already been done, and focus your energy on doing it faster, doing it in a more efficient way. Only efficiency is not enough. Effectiveness is really critical. And only effectiveness and efficiency is also not enough. Apply a sense of empathy as you work on it.

The last area of advice or thoughts are on stewardship. From SSAC itself, we have some clarity about five areas that we're really focused on. We're focused on, keen focus, on DNS abuse, new gTLDs, DNSSEC, alternative namespaces, and internet governance and the security, stability, and resilient (SSR) aspects of internet governance. Those are five areas. Inside of those, we want to bring to the CEO, focus on domain name registration data.

Two points there. One is data collection should reflect on-the-ground reality of the entities who are involved in the registration process, and also on-the-ground reality of those who have an essential need to use registration data. So there's a balancing that has to happen. I'll just quote from a report that the SSAC had put out earlier in our tenure. It's

a document called SSAC 101, and it says: "SSAC is concerned that access to registration data has been diminished far further than legal obligations require and further than it is prudent for responsible stewardship of the namespace." That kind of crystallizes all of our thoughts so far.

I will stop here and see if you have any comments.

JAMES GALVIN:

Thank you, Ram. I know we have a number of Board members who can jump in and speak on these issues. I don't think we have to go through the issues in any particular order. So, who would like to speak first and speak about something? I see Tripi, your hand up. Please.

TRIPTI SINHA:

Thank you, Ram. It looks like the SSAC has put a lot of thought into this. I really appreciate it. Efficiency has come up numerous times, and you gave the example of 6,000 hours to do the transfer policy. I'm sure you've looked at it a little bit. If you were to sit down with the next CEO and cite that as an example, could you also suggest where you thought time was wasted? How would you take that 6,000 hours and reduce it to maybe a thousand, two thousand?

RAM MOHAN:

I cannot speak for all of the community that was participating in it, but certainly could provide ideas on-- In that area, Tripti, I don't know whether the goal is on reducing the number of hours or whether the goal should be, is the process that we built to do this the ideal process.

I don't profess to have the answer. But what we're trying to say is, look not just at efficiency, but also look at effectiveness.

TRIPTI SINHA: Maybe I shouldn't have focused on the hours. It's more I'm assuming you've got a set of ideas that you would propose. "This is what we should and should not be doing."

RAM MOHAN: Yes, we have ideas. We'd be happy to put our shoulder to the wheel with the new CEO.

JAMES GALVIN: Thank you. Chris, you were next.

CHRIS CHAPMAN: Thank you. The three issues you outlined, the second one interested me, the three E's. Obviously, efficiency and effectiveness, we want both. I think it's fair to say we're acutely conscious of that. That remains the challenge to deliver on that. The third "E" in that I almost thought could have gone into the first bucket of the environment. Why that "E" against the other two? You touched on it, but you didn't really go into it. I'm intrigued by it.

RAM MOHAN: Far too often you have organizations that focus on becoming more efficient, becoming more effective, and forget about how you do it. How you do it really matters because people are involved in it, people are touched by it. Do those things. Be absolutely focused on doing it, but do it with an appreciation of the people involved, and have empathy while you're doing it. That's the intent.

JAMES GALVIN: Thank you. Maarten?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Thanks, Ram. You're very well-informed, and I appreciate the comments. As you may know, I just want to draw attention to the strategic plan, but we recognize this. I mean, one thing is as a multi-stakeholder organization and overseeing more than five billion users, not moving fast is an asset too. Being transparent and working together is inherent, asking for some hours. But we also recognize that next to the processes that we built over the decades together, to have stakeholders all involved in a good fashion, we need to have agility. That's one of the points that comes very much forward in the new plan. So your ideas to add to agility are very welcome.

One example was when we set up the [inaudible - 00:12:55] fund for, not planned but still important, projects within cycles, and there's other examples. And we recognize also, and for the first time ever, we've come into a situation where we have to even care more about our finances and make sure that income and spending match, as a

nonprofit with a purpose. So, ideas on that are very welcome too. Thank you for raising these points and looking forward to hearing more about it.

JAMES GALVIN:

Thank you, Maarten. I think with that, in the interest of time, let's move on to the next subject. I'm going to reorder the agenda here a little bit and jump to ICANN budgets and financials. Thank you for that. I think once again, this is a topic to turn over to Ram to lead off.

RAM MOHAN:

Thank you. We don't have an agenda or specific points to make with you, but we are also paying attention as all the rest of the community is on how ICANN is managing its budgets and its financials. We will likely be on the receiving end of changes that are instituted to the budgets and to how things are run. We are curious to hear what your focus is going into the next year, the financial year. The specific pin in this is I'm hoping that you also have some scenario planning in place for the happy case where your revenues increase, but more importantly, that you have some plans in place for a sad case if your revenues decline, and that those plans are plans that can be executed in a reasonable timeframe with communication, etc. I'll stop there.

DANKO JEVTOVIC:

Thank you for the discussion about the budget and our plannings. I don't want to create this session into a big budget discussion, but obviously we went through the cost saving exercise that was, I think,

very effectively done but it was a big cultural change for our whole organization, for our triad. Because for the first time in the history of ICANN growth has stopped and the inflation that happened resulted in the situation. I mean, this fiscal year we have lost. That loss has not impacted ICANN's stability. We are from the financial point of view in a safe situation where we have very healthy reserves, but we need to change the way we work. I think that very well connects to your previous discussion about efficiency. The org, with the support of the Board, have created a cost saving plan that goes very much to all structures within ICANN org.

Obviously, given the structure of our costs, the largest part of that is the staff. The staff was significantly impacted. But also I think it is very important to recognize that this is a cultural change in the way we think about finances. I think this goes to the key of your points. We see that the growth has significantly slowed and we have, as usual, our funding projections that show that in the future we cannot expect the numbers we had before.

In our budget, there is a range of the numbers. I wouldn't now go into discussing the particular numbers, but there are also plans to continue to increase on savings. We're also increasing contingency funds. The idea of this cost saving exercise is to do the Board's mandate to stabilize finances and to align the run rate of expenditures by the end of this fiscal year with the funding that we expect. We do have plans and we expect that we will be back in black. Any additional details is something that I think is more appropriate for the finance discussion.

I also wanted to thank the community in support for the finance work in ICANN. I chair the Board finance committee and tomorrow I will be handing that to Sajid Rahman, who I think wants to say a few words on the current plans and on the things that we are implementing to have a more precise Board oversight on the cost in order not to experience such sudden changes in financial situation.

Sajid Rahman:

Thanks, Danko. One of the challenges in the budget process is we take costs like a rock. So if you are preparing your budget for 2025, usually the approach for an organization is 2024 cost is a rock, you can't touch it. On top of that, you add, depending on inflation, how the organization is doing -- 1%, 2%, 5%, etc. One of the things that we're doing now is questioning the rock itself, which comes to your point of efficiency and how we bring more effectiveness.

Looking at the cost from a first principle angle and asking, are these costs necessary to deliver the mission of ICANN? And I think that's a fundamental shift that needs to happen to continue to make ICANN financially stable and strong, because we cannot always control the funding aspects of it, which are sometimes beyond our control and depend on a lot of macro environments. So, that's one.

The second thing we are doing as a Board, as Danko alluded to, is we are looking at some of the reports that we get so we can get a better understanding of how the revenue funding and cost is performing and get a regular forecast so we don't do things in a knee-jerk way. We don't want to overreact to your point of empathy. We also don't want to be

caught off-foot so that we are always on top of how the numbers are looking like six, seven months down the line. I think that sort of changes in how we approach the budget and focus process will significantly improve the decision quality that we make down the line. These are the two things.

JAMES GALVIN:

Thank you, Sajid and Danko. Sally, I believe you want to say a few words too?

SALLY COSTERTON:

Oh, yes, happy to. Thank you, Ram, for raising this very important topic. You and I have talked about this quite a lot. I do appreciate your collaborative and practical support in this. I just wanted to make that comment, because it's very helpful. I feel that this group is very focused on what can we do differently, and not having sacred cows, for want of a better way of putting it, which you sort of mentioned in your messaging. My colleagues on the Board have mentioned process, which is key. Those are very important. They will, I think, make it increasingly-- As to Sajid's point, I think it is absolutely about getting regular updates on the forecasting in both directions. And from the organization's standpoint, yes, we have shifted into a new gear, as I would describe it. It is both the way we manage our financial controls, if that's a way of putting it, and the way we handle budgeting.

But Danko alluded to the fact of a shift in culture. This is key, because ICANN is moving into a different stage, maybe for a few years. None of

us really know. Some other organizations in the internet space are going through very similar challenges for similar sorts of reasons. We've been through a long period of huge growth. The internet has just done that. Now we may see some flattening. We know that we think we probably will. So we need, as an organization, as a community, to be working -- not always as a community, but often. Because some of the staff costs are often responding to work that we're doing with the community to develop and implement policies. I think the key word for me is about prioritization. We talk a lot about it in ICANN. We find it very difficult because prioritization is very hard to do bottom up, whether you're in the community, whether you're in the organization.

But we've seen some very useful tools that the community has developed from its prioritization working group, for example, that I'm looking at very closely to make sure that inside the organization, especially as Curtis comes on Board, that he's well equipped with the right insight and the right tools to be able to make good choices. And also, encouraging him to partner with you -- which you talked about in your earlier comments -- as we move forward. And realizing that sometimes, but not always, but at least sometimes it is a collaborative discussion. Because we have to go on that journey of change together. So, thank you for raising the topic.

RAM MOHAN:

Thank you, Sally, Sajid, and Danko. It's really encouraging to hear, especially the plans that you're putting forward and the change in gear. That's really important. For the Board members here and for the

community, I echo what Sally has said. We've built a very strong and collaborative partnership in trying to solve these problems. Sally, you and your team have been very good at communicating quite openly. We have these challenges, help us solve these challenges. Because we feel that we are ICANN, you are ICANN, so it's not us and them. Thanks.

JAMES GALVIN:

Danko, please.

DANKO JEVTOVIC:

Two important points on finance and on cost saving plan. First of all, ICANN will continue to deliver on its mission. The cost saving plan does not compromise what we do. This is the key to everything we are doing. Also, the cost saving plan is created in that effect that we are not counting on the discussion of fees. That is a separate item totally. The cost will come in line with the expenses that we have. I think this is assurance that stability is there. As I said before, financially we are a stable organization. I think this is important related to your earlier comments about how we want to be more effective but within our mission, within our remit to deliver on it.

RAM MOHAN:

Thank you, Danko. I agree. Those are really crucial points. Stability combined with predictability will result in increased trust. Thank you.

JAMES GALVIN: Okay, with that, let's move back to our strategic planning discussion. We have both members here who are co-chairs of the Board's strategic planning committee. I think with that, I will turn this over to you, Ram.

RAM MOHAN: We had a brief discussion inside and the total amount of time in this meeting could be completely consumed by a conversation here, so let me not do that. These are the four key pillars. But some specific comments on just a couple of these things. Goal 1, which is the stakeholder representation and advancing of strategic alliances, I really like that you have in 1.3.1: "Demonstrate that ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance remains the right model for delivering ICANN's mission."

You probably already know this, but in some circles, every once in a while ICANN falls into the trap of calling it "the" multistakeholder model of governance as if the ICANN multistakeholder model of governance is the multistakeholder model of governance. So that's really the only part there. Just keep it in the front of your mind that what we're doing here is a good multistakeholder model and a multistakeholder approach, but not the only one. I'm not saying that's what you're doing. I'm just saying every so often we fall into that trap and just be aware of it.

DANKO JEVTOVIC: Yes, thank you, Ram, for pointing that out. You were there when we were developing the current plan in which we touched upon this. The

new plan in its pillar one, the multistakeholder model, has both improved the working together. So, evolving the model. Because if we keep it as it was at some point it will get stuck. The other way is indeed promoting the model, and the title says Evolve and Promote ICANN's Multistakeholder Model to Sustain its Inclusive Internet Governance model. But we very much recognize more now than we did five years ago that we are a player, an important player in this space, but we do it together.

Then, if we say 1.3, where we talk about Expand Strategic Alliances to Advocate for the Multistakeholder Model of Internet Governance, we recognize there's other models too. IGF is a clearly different model. The RARs have different models. More than before, this is explicitly recognized, and we also addressed that in the strategies and the operational plan to follow up on this. So thank you for pointing that out, but yes, indeed, very much aware that this is key.

RAM MOHAN:

Thank you. On this next one, I think we've already covered -- we've already spoken about financial sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy. We're aligned with where you're going and we've given you more specific feedback in our prior discussion.

On the next one, I have some comments on 3.1. If you close your eyes for a moment and if you imagine that four years down the road, 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 are done. So you have promoted the advancement of universal acceptance in internationalized domain names. You've collaborated with all the relevant parties to promote it. Those

problems are solved. If you take that as a given, then what is left? And what is left to facilitate digital inclusion is not just cultivation of consumer choice, competition, inclusivity, and innovation. What is left is language. Not scripts, not universal acceptance, but how do you reach people and how do you get them to be included? So that is what is left.

Our suggestion to you is to consider having a language part in there. Let me be clear. I'm not talking about preservation of languages. I'm not talking about expression of languages in the DNS, because that is already covered by internationalized domain names. It's something a little bit different. Because, digital inclusion, when you want to go to a community, you want to communicate to them in the language that is most normal for them. So, that's a piece of feedback on that area.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN:

Yes, thank you, Ram. First and for all, in four years to have this completely solved sounds like a dream. But assuming taking that hypothesis first, important to understand we will review the strategic plan every time. We will revise, and if new things come up, they may come up there. If things are done, it's okay. That's the first remark. As you know, we think of working more with UNESCO and things like that, but we are also very much focused on the mission, and this is the basis for where we are now. Then, we tend to stay away from content. Thank you for your reflection, and good to take forward either now or in our annual revisions when we get closer to realizing the idea and space to be universally acceptable.

JAMES GALVIN: Thank you, Maarten. We have two other Board members to put in the queue here, Tripti and then Edmon.

TRIPTI SINHA: Ram, I don't think I fully understood your point on language. I just want to tease it out a little bit, because the way you explained it, I assumed that was incorporated in 3.1. What did you mean exactly?

RAM MOHAN: So let me give you an example. I was speaking with folks from the Unicode Consortium a little while ago. They do a tremendous amount of work in having languages and the scripts behind the languages be expressed in a digital format. The challenge for them is that when you are an indigenous community that has a written script and you want to know how to convert that written script into Unicode, the material that's available is not in their language. So they don't actually know what to do, therefore, even though the methods exist, such as universal acceptance IDNs, that's what I'm trying to say.

TRIPTI SINHA: I understood what you're saying. Because our role is to facilitate the presentation of various languages, but the actual work behind the facilitation of that presentation belongs to somebody else. When you say "included in our strategic plan" how would you like it included so we don't blow the scope and go outside the mission of ICANN?

RAM MOHAN: My thought is I think it should be a design element rather than something that you deliver on. In my opinion, when it gets to content, that's not in ICANN's remit.

TRIPTI SINHA: Exactly. But the whole point of being able to type in a URL or have something in a different script implies that the website that you end up on should be in that script. So isn't it implicit in what we say? Otherwise, why would you even bother with IDNs?

RAM MOHAN: Fair enough. I think we probably need a longer conversation offline. Because I think there is more to it than just that. Because for example, if your device doesn't let you type it in that way, you have a problem. That's not something ICANN can solve. What I'm really saying is if you want to facilitate digital inclusion, be aware that solving universal acceptance in internationalized domain names only gets you partway. I'm not proposing you should add it. I'm saying be aware that there is more to it.

TRIPTI SINHA: I'm just giving you a little bit of pushback because we are doing our part in the digital inclusion experiment or whatever you want to call it. We're doing our part. If I only spoke Hindi and typed a URL in Hindi, I would

expect the landing page of the website to be in Hindi. It would be useless to me if it were in English, right?

RAM MOHAN: And that's not in your control.

TRIPTI SINHA: Right, exactly. So you're talking about a much larger ecosystem. I just want to make sure we don't go outside our mission.

RAM MOHAN: I'm totally aligned with you on that.

JAMES GALVIN: Thank you, Tripti. Edmon?

EDMON CHUNG: Not adding too much, but I think the conversation here was useful. But I did want to point out that, first of all, I agree with you, Ram, very much. Those of you who know me, I'm very keen about this particular topic. As the Board talked about the issue, we did touch into that. The remit of ICANN is also a component. Actually, 3.1.2 is a little bit more than that. When you go into the operations and stuff, a lot of that would be collaborating with external parties. This is just a very condensed version, so it doesn't include some of the language aspects that you have mentioned.

I think the Board and also the staff team that is working on it is very well aware of that approach. And to link ICANN's work, which is a small part, but that's why the larger umbrella, which is updated this time, I hope goes the right direction, facilitating digital inclusion. Because that's the larger goal. But for ICANN's mission, we focus on the IDNs. But then we collaborate with other external parties, including international organizations.

I think Maarten mentioned UNESCO, which we are working very closely with now, and potentially other organizations that go to the front line of dealing with some of the language issues. So I think it is definitely in it when the Board discusses. I obviously will be stepping off the Board soon, but I'm pretty sure that the staff team taking this forward also will take that frame of mind into consideration. But this is a good reminder for the larger picture, I think.

RAM MOHAN:

Thanks, Edmon. Look, I think we're actually quite aligned. There is zero desire for you to expand your remit beyond the scripts and what you're expressing. This may have to do with the words you use and the language that is used to express it rather than what's in there. So, thank you, Edmon, for that description.

In the final piece, this is our motherhood and apple pie. We're not going to tell you not to do this. We love that you're going to do this. Continue to strengthen security, the Internet's unique identifier system. More power to you on that. That's it on the strategic plan, just informal comments.

JAMES GALVIN: Let's move on to the next discussion. SSAC has a couple of its documents where it wants to highlight some important elements of that for the Board for discussion. We're going to turn this one over to Peter Thomassen, who is going to talk about DS automation.

PETER THOMASSEN: I'll give you a quick overview of the motivation and results recommendations in this SSAC report, SSAC126 on DNS record automation. DNS operations, or DNSSEC operations, are well automated in general in large registry and registrar functions. Specifically, when the registrar also runs the DNS service for the child domain, then it's fully automated. When the registrant turns on DNSSEC, then they sign it and they automatically do all the stuff that has to happen in the parent zone.

When the DNS operator of the child and the registrar are not the same entity, however, then there is more of a problem because it is currently not fully automated. So the registrant has to get in and perform a number of steps. Specifically, the registrant has to take care that in the parent zone the DS record which links to the child's validation key gets published. They have to somehow get that stuff and forward it to their registrar.

I'll spend a minute or two on saying how complicated that might be. Here's a number of things that the registrant has to do in this process. The first step is that the registrant has to go to the DNS operator and

tick a box "I want to use DNSSEC" and the zone gets signed. But at that point, not much has actually happened. The zone isn't validatable because the parent zone doesn't have the DS record yet. The registrant has to go to the DNS operator and fetch the DNSSEC key parameters. That's the second step.

Then they have to log into the registrar interface or the resellers interface or for ccTLDs sometimes the registry interface, and there they have to copy the parameters that they got from the DNS operator. Each of those interfaces might be different. Registrars have different interfaces, and some even don't have a web interface and people would have to open a support ticket. If there is an interface then some registrars and registries accept that information in DS format. The DS record contains a hash of the validation key. The operator would provide a pre-hashed representation of this and then give that to the registrant who forwards it to the registrar. But other registries or registrars prefer having the key itself and then they compute the DS record from that themselves. The registrant would have to figure out which input format the parent wants.

In addition, things like algorithm numbers which appear in this record, they are technically a number but they also have mnemonics. Some interfaces, like those abbreviations like SHA-1 or RSA or whatever -- elliptic curve something -- and some other interfaces just 1 to 13 or 4 or something. That's something that the DNS operator will provide. Maybe the DNS operator says the numeric format and then the parent wants the abbreviation format and then the confusion is big. Some

interfaces allow inputting the whole string and others have subfields. So, that's all something that registrars have to figure out.

And usually, I would expect most registrants are not DNSSEC experts and it's quite a challenge. If you make any errors in this step then that might either cause an error message or it might break resolution for your domain because validation fails. That's a pretty big problem for those users who want to use DNSSEC but don't have the DNS service with the registrar. So those are five steps. Especially, if you have a large domain portfolio, that's very annoying to repeat, like 50 times. In fact, the same steps are also needed when the operator changes the key. For example, if there is an algorithm change, which surely will come at some point because of post-quantum transition, And then all of this stuff has to be repeated manually for these users.

In fact, child DNS operators who run DNS service for registered zones are asked for assistance every day about this. They receive support tickets. "Hey, I can't provision this, how do I do it?" And in fact, there is a paper that has investigated attempts to enable DNSSEC at a large DNS operator and it has found that 40% of those processes fail. The user did step one, they ticked "I want DNSSEC" and the zone is signed, but then something else later went wrong. To make this smoother and less error prone, we need automation. Like Let's Encrypt did for HTTPS certificates, which were not much used like 15 years ago, except for perhaps with banks.

Then they came around with automation and the frequency with which one would see a "Certificate Expired" error message and the browser

really went down and at the same time deployment went up. That's what automation can deliver. So it would be a big improvement if those registrants who want DNSSEC just need to do the first step and not the other five steps, which might be a big imposition on their time.

That was the longest part. The next slide has an illustration of this. At the bottom is the child operator, at the top is the registrar, registry and so on. So in the middle is the registrant who has to facilitate the exchange currently, and the idea is to remove this middle layer and have the registrar or registry talk directly to the lower level where the DNS operator sits.

There's various ways of doing this. For example, the DNS operator could push an update upwards. It's not clear how to do that. There is no standard for this. For pushing the information from the child operator to the parent, there's no standards but in fact, for the other direction, when the parent proactively pulls the information and looks for DS information to be published, there are standards and they do provide authentication, they do provide full automation. And they have some downsides mainly about timing, but they are definitely good enough to use.

The next slide therefore has the recommendations from SSAC126. The first one is if a registry or registrar wishes to implement DS automation for third-party DNSSEC operations, then what's currently recommended is the mechanism specified by the ITF that is based on CDS or CDNS key records. I'm not going to go into how that works in detail, but it exists, it works. It has standards, it has deployment. It's

not perfect, as I said, but it does work and people should be able to use it if they want. The second recommendation is that ICANN org should support registries and registrars who want to do this by providing pragmatic processes, for example, facilitating Fast-Track RSEP.

The third recommendation, as I mentioned before, there are some inefficiencies. It's not perfect. These things can be improved. It would be great if they were handled the same way in the whole TLD space, for example, timing expectations and things like that. Or what happens if there is an EPP lock? Do you continue or not continue the automation? But those are all details and we think that we need to arrive at consistent guidance for all the different registries and registrars. Some guidance documents will probably follow at some point. It would be great if ICANN org could work with us at that point to arrive at something that makes everyone happy.

JAMES GALVIN:

Okay, thank you, Peter. With that, Ram wants to add to this.

RAM MOHAN:

Peter, just in terms of explaining this, you have there on No. 2 that ICANN should support by using some kind of a fast track. Is that hard to do? Is that a policy thing? Where does that fall?

PETER THOMASSEN:

So I think the process exists and it can be used. The question is whether it will be exercised. My understanding is that registries are afraid that

they will have a large effort and cost if each of them has to do a full RSEP. Because if this functionality is considered a new registry feature, then an RSEP has to be done, and it's costly. If everybody has to redo it, that would be something that registries have said would not be in their interest. So the better approach would be if it's done once and then the subsequent registries can use a kind of template way.

RAM MOHAN:

Thank you. Just to make sure I understand, what you're proposing here is that if you take the process as it exists, you cannot get that technological advancement because it's very expensive to implement. So maybe a better process such as the Fast-Track RSEP might help. Design it, do it once, and then have everybody implement it. Is that right?

PETER THOMASSEN:

I'm not a policy and process expert. My understanding is the Fast-Track RSEP concept does already exist. The question is whether it can be used. The recommendation is that ICANN org should facilitate making it as pragmatic and quick as possible. But maybe somebody else can speak to-- Yes, John Levine.

JOHN LEVINE:

We have an existing commitment that everybody should do DNSSEC to the extent that they can. This is essentially a technical improvement. It's documented and standardized by the ITF. I'm thinking back to when two registries wanted to add DMARC records, which was, again, a

standard thing, with very little risk. It was a pain in the neck. I mean, they had to go and hire a consultant who turned out to be me. Stepping back and saying this is simply a step to facilitate something that the Board has already committed that we want to do.

So while it's important to make sure that nothing terrible happens, I think it's important also to understand that this is a low-risk chain. In particular, there's some other automation things in the pipeline that ITF has recently standardized. So I would hope that ICANN would say this is a way to make the internet better that we've already agreed we want to do. So other than saying, "Oh my goodness, something terrible might happen," you know, "What's the minimum we need to do to make sure this is done in a sensible way?" As Peter was saying, I think there's an order of magnitude difference in cost between the slow way and a reasonable way.

RAM MOHAN: Thank you. Low-risk upgrade.

PETER THOMASSEN: Can I say one more thing? It's not only that the change is a low-risk change, it's also that introducing this reduces the chance of error that lies in this manual provisioning that is happening so far. It is expected that the error rate goes down. And the experience from ccTLDs shows that there's no problems to be expected. I think around nine or 10 ccTLDs have deployed that. Also, RIPE NCC uses it for automatically

doing DNSSEC for reverse zones. So, we don't expect any adverse effects.

RAM MOHAN:

Thank you. I think the thought for the Board is that we think it's a good idea. We think it's a low-risk upgrade, but you probably ought to have or come back with the perspective on it and then quickly implement it, if that analysis concurs with our assessment that this is a low-risk upgrade.

STEVE CROCKER:

Yes, thank you. I'll also add a little context from the Board perspective on this. You've heard a lot of detail about how DNSSEC works and how this could work. I think the important point to take away from that is that there is a gap in what it means to implement DNSSEC in our ecosystem. What Peter is highlighting and what this document highlights is that there is a solution. There's a solution set. It doesn't have a recommendation about something. ccTLDs are experimenting. gTLDs aren't at the moment, for a variety of different reasons.

SSAC is expressing that it would be useful and helpful to explore this and ask, in those couple of recommendations, make sure that this happens, ask for an assessment from ICANN org. And then there would be obligations that would have to be explored with the community at large to move this forward. But in the interest of our support of DNSSEC we should think about how we can move that forward, and this is one method. I've seen Edmon's hand up. Edmon, you want to jump in here?

EDMON CHUNG:

Yes, thank you for the presentation. I think it's very useful. I hope it was useful for other Board members as well. One thing I want to clarify, kind of in line with what Ram was asking, but further a little bit. Why would an RSEP even be needed if this is a kind of automation? Is there additional provision to the registry? Why would this be needed? I mean, if this is just an update. And then the second question, I also don't hear that this would require any policy work, I just want to clarify on it.

PETER THOMASSEN:

If I understand the policies correctly, I don't think that policy chains are needed to have a Fast-Track RSEP. Why RSEP? As John said, we think that this is a natural evolution of the DNSSEC protocol, as other things that evolve are as well. It's a good question. From the perspective of many in the SSAC, an RSEP would not be necessary, but a few ICANN meetings back, we had a discussion on the DNSSEC panel with folks from ICANN org and legal, I think, and the situation was described with uncertainty about whether that's to be considered a new registry feature, which would then require an RSEP. We sensed some hesitation about whether this should be considered a new feature that requires an RSEP. We think that's not needed, but if ICANN org thinks it is a new feature, well then apparently it is a new feature.

JOHN LEVINE: From what I understand though, RSEP is only for cases where it affects equal access, for example, for registrars and also situations where the registry might be leveraging its advantage as the TLD. This seems to me to be very technical oriented. But I encourage, of course, this is just my personal interpretation, but I would be very interested to know from the org perspective, but in general, from what you presented, it seems like an RSEP shouldn't be required.

RAM MOHAN: Thank you, Edmon. Our recommendations are already with you. Here in this conversation, our intent is to say, we believe that what we're recommending is a low-risk upgrade, but it does require some further analysis. We will, as we have done many times before, continue to collaborate with you, the Board, and with org, OCTO, etc., to help drive this forward. But it's a useful upgrade for the entire ecosystem that ICANN helps work on. With that, back to you, Jim.

JAMES GALVIN: Thank you. Steve, I believe you want to just add a couple of words.

STEVE CROCKER: There's a worked example of a gTLD implementation that was presented during a DNSSEC and security workshop and an org person countered that it's out of spec and forced them to take it down.

JAMES GALVIN:

Okay, thank you for that, Steve. With that, we only have a few minutes left. We're not going to go into the last presentation that was offered there right now. Instead, what I'd like to do is to use Any Other Business activity to take a moment to acknowledge, first, Sally Costerton. On behalf of the SSAC, we certainly wanted to thank you for stepping in as the interim CEO role and having continued in that role for two years. Your stewardship of this organization and keeping us going and supporting everyone, the SSAC and the processes, we very much appreciate that. We want to take an opportunity just to acknowledge that and say thank you.

RAM MOHAN:

And I want to take this opportunity to also share with you, the Board, as well as all of the community, that our longtime hero inside the SSAC, Steve Sheng, this is his last ICANN meeting, the last time he's going to be with us in this role. He is moving on to a new chapter in his life. But Steve has just been essential to the success and the growth of the SSAC. I also want to commend him, to your attention, and express our gratitude to him. Thank you, Steve.

JAMES GALVIN:

And with that, we are one minute ahead, so please go enjoy your free minute. We're adjourned for today. Thank you very much.

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