
ICANN81 | AGM – ICANN Board Members welcomes ICANN81 Fellowship and NextGen@ICANN Programs Participants

Wednesday, November 13, 2024 – 13:15 to 14:30 TRT

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Welcome, everyone. Welcome to the special session to meet with ICANN Board members and ICANN interim CEO, Sally Costerton.

My name is Siranush Vardanyan. I will be your participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During this session, questions and comments will only be read aloud if submitted in the proper form as I have noted in the Zoom chat. Interpretation for this session will include English, French, and Spanish. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in the Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak.

Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if you will be speaking language other than English, and speak, please, at a reasonable pace to allow accurate interpretation. And with that, it's my great pleasure to introduce our guests here. And the first guest I would like to introduce is a proud for the fellowship program. Our first fellow who became a Board member, Leon Sanchez, who is here with us.

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LEON SANCHEZ: Thank you very much, Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: And actually, the motto, once a fellow, always a fellow, came from the generation where me and Leon were fellows. So, Leon, without further ado, the floor is yours.

LEON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Siranush. So we do have Spanish interpretation, right? Okay, so I want to speak in Spanish so we can take advantage of the interpretation services.

Hello, thank you. Thank you for your invitation to join you, Siranush. As always, it's always a pleasure to be back with the fellows. Here is where my ICANN journey actually started. This was my starting point. This is how I became actively engaged in ICANN. As you very well said, once a fellow, always a fellow. This session is very special. And I would like to share something that I was chatting about with Siranush right before the start. When Siranush and I were fellows, I am like your grandfather, the fellows' grandpa, in a way.

Well, back then, we only met the CEO and the ICANN Board Chair. Those were the only two members that engaged directly with us. It was a quick meet and greet, and that was it. And we were delighted. But nowadays, more than half of the ICANN Board is here with us, in this room. And that speaks to the importance of this program. It speaks to the commitment that the ICANN Board has towards you as individuals that are starting your ICANN journey, and how we appreciate your

contributions to this organization. I want to thank you, of course, for your interest and for your efforts as fellows.

I don't know if Siranush still wakes you up very early, 7 a.m. in the morning. Oh, you are a little bit softer now, Siranush. What happened? Okay. Anyway, your effort is really commendable. It does not go unnoticed. I am fully aware of the challenges that you all face, and I want to encourage you all to keep it up and just leave you with this thought.

The fellowship program is the best program that you will ever have access to. It is a guided journey into ICANN, and please make the most of it. But in exchange, your commitment is to contribute to ICANN's mission. You have to cooperate with the community. You have to accept this responsibility and take into account that if you ever have a leadership role within the organization and the community, that role is to serve the community, is not to serve yourselves. What we give back to ICANN is the most important contribution to ICANN's mission, so that the future generations still enjoy a stable Internet and benefit from this program. I would like to see this program grow.

In my time, there used to be about 60 fellows. I think now there are 40 fellows. I do understand we are going through some budgetary issues and we need to be fiscally responsible. However, this is a highly valuable program, the fellowship program, and it should get more support. So from my role in the ICANN Board, I am going to do whatever I can so that this budget is increased and you can continue working in the fellowship program, because we see clear results. You can actually

trace each fellow. You can actually follow their journey after the fellowship program, and you can see their contributions to the community. So, their return on investment of this program is really, really high in terms-- I mean, not only in financial terms, but also in terms of the contributions to ICANN's mission.

Thank you again, Siranush, for your invitation. This session is not about ourselves. I would like to listen to you. I would like to listen to the fellows and to make the most of this session together. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN:

Thank you very much, Leon. Thank you. And we definitely feel the support from the Board coming. Just to give a brief idea how many fellows and NextGeners are at ICANN81, we have 39 selected fellows with two virtual and 26 female and 14 male out of that group, and we have 11 NextGeners. Two of them are virtual and six female, five male. So we have a big group here. We pay attention to the diversity. We have representation from all the regions, while NextGeners are all from Asia-Pacific, as we are in Asia-Pacific region.

But just to have an idea that these faces who represent the fellowship and NextGen program are the future of the ICANN, as I usually say. And thank you, Leon, for that. I would like to give the floor now to ICANN interim CEO, President and CEO, Sally Costerton. Sally, the floor is yours.

SALLY COSTERTON:

Thank you, Siranush. And welcome, everybody. I love seeing this. This is one of my favorite moments of the ICANN meeting, looking at all your faces. I'm so looking forward to getting to know all of you through the next months and years.

And I wanted to pick up something that Leon said specifically. He talked about your journey. And when I verify, I've been at ICANN for 12 years, and I have two hats, as we say in English. I have two different roles at the moment. One is to be the interim CEO of the organization, which, of course, is the staff team that Siranush and I work in together. In fact, the other is I'm head of ICANN's stakeholder engagement function. And this includes the work we do bringing newcomers in and programs that Siranush was just talking about.

When I first met Siranush, she was on her journey from being a fellow. And she was, in fact, in the APRALO, so the regional At-Large organization in the AP region. And she impressed me immediately, because what I saw from her was a passion for then, yes, the fellowship, because she'd just been a fellow, as Leon was saying, but also for ICANN. And Leon talked about a guided learning opportunity. And this is why we do this. It's a big investment of time, the fellowship. It's been very carefully designed over many years. And we change it with feedback as we go through the years. We don't keep it static. But it is designed to be guided. And the reason for that is because we know that becoming engaged, an engaged participant at ICANN, that's the goal.

But getting there is often not straightforward. That first ICANN meeting, very about the same time as I met the APRALO lady here, was Toronto.

And I flew from London to Toronto. It was very cold. And I'd come out from running a public relations firm for 12 years. And that was my life. And I landed in Toronto. And I spent a week with the ICANN community, not on the fellowship program, unfortunately for me. And I really didn't understand anything anybody said for an entire week. They were very nice. And I could see that what they were doing was important.

But it was like a foreign country. I mean, it was like a cult. I couldn't understand the acronyms, the interrelationships. I'd never heard of the idea of bottom-up stakeholder model. I mean, this was just all different. I was used to a top-down world. You hit your number. You don't hit your number. Pretty simple. What do we give back to the shareholders? Are we breaking the law? Hopefully not. That's about it. And it was a great business.

But this idea that everybody was equal, that everybody comes together in this work that I've occasionally said can look a bit like a magic trick. You know this expression. Because when you're inside it, and some of you are more familiar with it than others. Depends how many fellowships you've had. But when you are somebody, for example, like Siranush or Leon, it's like anything in life. Once you're inside it and you understand the language and the rules, it makes sense. Although even for people who've been here many years, there are new things to surprise us all the time because we work in the internet space and the internet is constantly changing.

So getting to that state of comfort is what you need to be confident. And if you're not confident, you won't participate. So I urge you to use this

opportunity to take advantage of that guided journey. And that is partly learning opportunities, it's partly coaching, the opportunities like this to see the Board, they're real people, here they are, they're in action. Ask them questions about what it's like to be on the Board. How does it feel? Go and talk to them separately. They're very open, they want to meet you. Talk to them when you're in your regional meetings. My stakeholder engagement team will reach out to you where you live and invite you to become part of our Africa strategy or our LAC strategy. That's where all our stakeholders come together. Our governments, our regulators, our technical stakeholders, our civil society stakeholders to work on ICANN's mission at the regional level.

Think about the topics that really interest you. Are you interested in domain name abuse? Are you interested in empowering more civil society voices to come and be heard about the rules that govern the internet and govern ICANN? Are you interested in the public interest? These are very different kinds of topics and there is a home for those interests here in ICANN. And our staff team and the team I oversee are here to help you to do that, whether that's globally or locally or regionally or in your country and we have that helping hand, that guided hand that you have now. Those hands go on being there for you and I want you to know that because that is what makes you, will make you a meaningful, happy, committed participant in the future.

Because make no mistake, in my final comment, I've realized-- I've been in this interim role, I've been at ICANN for 12 years on engagement and I've been in the interim role for nearly two years. And what I have realized more than ever in this role is that when people talk about

ICANN's mission, and we talk about it a lot at ICANN, we say the mission. Like people don't say this in other organizations like we do. We also talk about the bylaws a lot. Most organizations don't talk about bylaws, we do. Because they're the rules that we use to guide us, to help us to work together. But that mission is more than just a piece of writing in a bylaw. That mission is the difference between the internet being sustainable and not being sustainable. Literally, I've really discovered that in this role.

So becoming part of this, you're working in the public interest, you're working for the world. Because the coordination of the technical identifiers and that critical technical infrastructure, this holds the internet up. Just like the foundation of a house holds your house up. The technical layer of the internet is what gives you what most people see as the internet, which is that, which is content. And we don't touch content, but if we didn't exist and do what we do, the way that we do it, look, you're from so many countries, you're from so many backgrounds. You yourselves are a multi-stakeholder group. And when you put your hands on those policies and you sit in those rooms and you find consensus, sometimes it's really hard. Because sometimes your groups of people that fundamentally don't agree, but you get there. You make policy that protects the internet. And because of that, what we do is, that's why we call it a mission. Because it is more than just a set of objectives. It is literally a mission-based organization.

So for those of you that are here for the first time, my warmest welcome. We're here to support you and I look forward to following your journey. Thank you very much.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Sally. Before I open the floor for questions, I would like to give the floor to one of the Board members who couldn't miss the session, to say hi to fellows and NextGenners. But he had to leave shortly. Without further ado, I would like to give the floor to James Galvin. James, please.

JAMES GALVIN: Thank you, Siranush. I really appreciate it. Thank you to all of you, the Fellows who are here. It is truly an honor to be here in front of you and be available to talk to you. I am the SSAC liaison to the ICANN Board and I'm here in part because of something that Leon said when he first opened. Your participation in your role here is mostly about your contribution to the process, what you bring here and your participation here.

SSAC really takes that seriously itself. For those of you who are newer, you would not know that SSAC had closed meetings. SSAC is the Security and Stability Advisory Committee. Our meetings were typically closed and people could not participate. We have, over this year, opened up our meetings, so they are now open to all. And we are seeking to grow our membership, grow our skill set, engage more people who are engaged with the community. We want to give back to the community within our role of being a security place and we would like to invite others who have security expertise and security-related skills to come and join us.

As you know, there is an opportunity for a fellow to be a part of SSAC and get kind of an internship-like model. I believe that Siranush is working through that with our SSAC leadership. But I want to encourage all of you, if you are interested, it's kind of the middle of the week, almost the end, I suppose, and if you haven't had a chance to come to SSAC meetings, you will have missed a lot of interesting opportunities, but there are recordings of the open sessions, so you can go back and look. I'd like to call out to you the SSAC Open Mic. There's an open mic session tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. if you can make it. It's an opportunity and come and bring any question whatsoever that you have about SSAC and security to the SSAC committee as a whole and folks will be there.

I also just want to say that generally I'm available. Anytime you see me in the hall and you see me running past, feel free just to stand in front of me. You might want to time that properly so I don't knock you over. But yes, I'm always happy to talk to a fellow and would love to engage with you at any time, this time, today, this meeting, anytime, next meeting, if you come around again, and welcome you to come to SSAC. And please do make a point of coming around to check us out and talk about your interest.

And I really do must apologize, as you might expect. I really did want to be here to make this introduction, but I do have to run off to another meeting that I'm already late for and they've been ping me about. But thank you, Siranush, for this opportunity.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Jim. Thank you for coming. Yes, I would like now to open the floor and while you are asking questions, I would like other Board members who are also here to take the responses and you will get to know them during the session as well. Thank you. Any questions? Okay, let me see. Coming. Okay, let's start with Lily. Lily, go ahead.

LILY EDINAM BOTSJOE: Hi, and thank you for the submission. And my name is Lily Edinam Botsjoe, and I am an ICANN81 fellow. For most of us fellows and Next-Genners, we are looking at our future. For you, you probably are looking at your past. And so one of the things you mentioned that is pretty exciting for me to hear was this is like a test bed for ICANN, because you call us the future. I want to know if you can take turns to walk us through how you got to your journey. How did you walk through the ranks to where you are now? Thank you.

LEON SANCHEZ: In a nutshell, working. Working a lot and engaging and jumping in through different sessions with different communities. And here's one piece of advice that I would like to give you. I am an intellectual property attorney. That's what I do for a living. So when I first came to ICANN as a fellow, I thought that my place was going to be the IPC. It seemed so natural, right, to go with the IP lawyers and start making contributions to that constituency. But someone told me what I'm telling you. Don't get too deep into what you do on a regular basis. Explore other options. Dive into other topics, into other communities. And maybe you'll find that the right place for you within this community

is not necessarily within those who do the same thing that you do for a living. And that's what I found out.

Back where I live in Mexico, back then I also did a lot of activism for users' rights. So I found myself suddenly involved with the At-Large community. And I started contributing to the At-Large community. Then I became an ALAC member through the NomCom. And it was just a timing which we were going through what we call the transition back in 2015, 2016. And there was a special group that was dedicated to building or drafting the new accountability framework for ICANN. And the ALAC, or the At-Large community, designated me to be the coacher for that group, the CCWG on accountability.

That, of course, brought to me the spotlight and brought to me a lot of experience and learning and a lot of work, too. And it just coincided that the person who was on the Board, seated by the At-Large community, Rinalia Abdul Rahim, back then, decided not to run for another term. So I saw the opportunity, seized it, put my name for election within the At-Large community, and I got elected. So that's why I came to the Board.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Yes, I have Edmon here, and I have Catherine. This is Edmon. Oh, sorry.

EDMON CHUNG: Okay, sorry about it. Edmon Chung here. And very good question. Thank you. I guess I started my journey, my ICANN journey, 25 years ago

in 1999. And I'm still walking that journey, and I like to think that I think about the future a little bit more than the past, although knowing some of the history of ICANN is important.

Building on what Leon said, one of the things, I'm not trying to disagree with Leon, but after exploring around a little bit, I think what I consistently tell fellows and others, newcomers, is you probably need to dig deep on one particular issue, join one working group, and dig deeper into that working group and contribute. Then it becomes much more interesting, actually, at ICANN, because you will also see your efforts gain results when your views are incorporated into policy recommendations, when your views are included in statements are made, that's the magic of ICANN to me and that's what keeps me coming back.

25 years ago I came to ICANN actually starting the internationalized domain names movement. Why do I call it a movement? Because it's still in the process. We're still talking about universal acceptance. But also, to defend the unique authoritative root of ICANN, which is very important part of what ICANN is. So just, I guess, of course, for myself, I have participated in different parts of ICANN and currently serving on the Board.

But regardless, actually, I think the most rewarding part of the journey is seeing that your contribution, together with a global group of people, being realized and actually useful on the internet and making sure that the internet continues to run uninterrupted and in a stable and secure manner. That's the rewarding part of the ICANN journey, I believe.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Edmon. Catherine?

CATHERINE ADEYA: Thank you very much. I could see you guys looking at me because I think some of them already asked me how I got onto the Board. And I think the same question I was asked in Kigali and other places, and the candid question that I was asked is, how did an African woman get on the Board? But I'll just tell you how I got on the Board, not the African part.

I think one of the things that I also want to say is you're very lucky. And if you understand, when I looked at even your program and how it's now advertised, there's one thing you do that you'll not be aware even the Board does. I think we still all do the ICANN Learn, the courses that you're given. We do it at the Board. You're looking surprised. So just telling you we all do it as well so that we are all aligned. So don't think that there's anything strange about it.

But one of the things I always tell people, different people have different journeys. I came into ICANN through what is called the NomCom. And this is just an open, where they want a certain representation. And somebody in the African set up who knows about the women in tech told me about it. And said, you need to apply for this. But before you get into a journey of applying for this, say, is it relevant for me? And what can I contribute? I have been involved in ICANN in different ways. And later on, people found how I was involved. I was in government in

Kenya. And any time they needed to do anything with the GAC and other things, this somehow ended up in my office. Because I had the minister's ears. And so I was very involved in some of the ICANN events in the past. But I also kept abreast of what is happening in internet governance space.

So one of the things that will always happen, and I tell people, any of you sitting here, is you see me here in the Board, but I'm hoping I'm working my way out of this by seeing people like you. Because someday you have to take this seat from me. And then I hope you'll do the same for my children as well. So one thing is excellence. Bring excellence in everything you do. And excellence will speak for you, no matter where you are. So even as you walk around and you talk to Board members, and I've engaged some of you and given you more information, excellence is the key in everything I do. And so you take that to the Boardroom, you continue with excellence. And the Boardroom, all these people are excellent. So just continue excellence and walk us out of these positions.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Catherine. Chris.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: I'll be very brief because I don't have much I can add to what Leon, Catherine, and Edmon have said. But one point I would make is some of us have planned to be on the Board. Others of us have come to it in a much more random and perhaps accidental way almost. Not entirely

accidental, I guess. But I would say be open to unexpected opportunities. I think this is still a very dynamic and evolving space. There are always new projects, new working groups starting up. Be open to the opportunity if someone says, hey, you might be interested in this, or we think your expertise might be useful here. And be ready to jump in. I think that's how you can make your way in this space. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Chris. I know we have only 30 minutes, but I want a lot of questions to be asked. And I have really a huge queue here waiting to ask their questions. So brief questions and brief responses. That's what I would appreciate. Dana we'll go with you.

DANA CRAMER: Hello, Dana Cramer, ICANN81 fellow from Canada. But I was also part of the NextGen program in Puerto Rico earlier this year. So I really appreciate these opportunities. I guess it's a bit of a question about something that I think could be done to help increase PhD students like myself in participation at ICANN. And I'm unsure if the Board could essentially help with this. Which is that I've spoken with a few people in the ICANN community. If it would be possible to start having academic posters in some of the unused real estate of the hallways.

Because for myself as a PhD student, after the fellowship, if I want to come to ICANN again, hopefully I can get involved in different ways. But my program, for example, wouldn't provide enough funding unless you

present anything at an ICANN conference. Because we receive about \$400 Canadian to attend a conference that we're not presenting at, but when we present at a conference it jumps up to \$3,000 Canadian. And so if there was some way to use some of the unused real estate of just some bulletin boards to just tack up a poster that we could just have a couple hours of symposium at lunch to present, that would actually make ICANN a lot more accessible to emerging subject matter experts in this field. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Donna. And just first suggestion which came to my mind is we do have engagement booth. This is where you can use the opportunity to invite some people to come and to make some presentations for a small group of people. Or, I mean, this is the way. Also, one of the ways to use. But yeah, Leon, please.

LEON SANCHEZ: Thanks, so what I think I'm hearing is that it would be great to have some space like for flash presentations in which you could engage and have a variety of people presenting on topics, etc., etc. And one of the wonders of this space and this community is that the community sets the agenda. The community sets what they want to have in the agenda for the meeting. So I think it's a great idea and a great proposal that you could push through the community. And maybe in the next meeting we'll have that space. You never know.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Leon. And before we go to the next question, I would like to introduce, and many of you already know, ICANN Board Chair Tripti Sinha. Tripti, thank you for coming and just to our fellows and NextGeners.

TRIPTI SINHA: Thank you, my apologies for being late. I just had another meeting, but first, a very warm welcome to all of you. And I'm so glad you're engaging with our community. It's a vibrant community. We need the next generation. We need new blood, new ideas, new thoughts. And I just heard Leon talking about how the agenda is set over here. And it is, as he said, a bottom-up process. The community sets the agenda because this is what we're here for. So please participate in every which way you can. And once again, a very warm welcome. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Abdul Rahman, we'll go to you.

ABDULRAHMAN ABOTALEB: Thank you very much. Actually, Leon is very wise and motivated example for us as a fellow, but I'm sure that there are other examples who are not promised for ICANN. My question is, how has the fellowship program historically influenced development of ICANN? And what do you see the most significant and successful outcomes from fellows' contribution? And what are the challenges that we may face in case we want to go further and deeply to make the biggest impact in ICANN? Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Before everybody will respond, I will say from my end as a fellow, be passionate, go for your dream. And one thing I used to tell to fellows, the leadership position is not the only way of being engaged in ICANN. We have so many fellows who are playing a critical role in their respective regions. When they come here, having this unique opportunity and bring back this knowledge to their region, they are making so many opportunities for those who do not have this opportunity to come to ICANN meeting. So you are becoming the leaders and the ambassadors in your respective regions as well. So if you would like to add.

LEON SANCHEZ: Yes, thank you, Siranush. You asked about challenges. And people who come to ICANN have a lot of challenges in many ways. As a fellow, you will face time zone challenges, right? Sometimes the meetings will be in a time zone that is not compatible with your day-to-day schedule. You will have maybe visa challenges to attend meetings. You will have economic challenges to attend meetings. You will have maybe family challenges, work challenges, all types of challenges.

But Siranush spoke about passion, and I would encourage you to grab that passion and make it the motor for you to go forward and go over all those challenges and hurdles and contribute to the ICANN mission. I applied for the fellowship program four times. I was denied three times. So that speaks to keep on going, don't give up, pursue your goals. And as Siranush was saying, leadership positions are not the only way to

contribute. There might be times in which your personal conditions, your personal situation might not allow you to engage in a way that you could exercise a leadership position.

But then again, if you keep that thread and you keep contributing to the community, there will come a time in which your personal situation will allow you to engage in a more meaningful way and continue to contribute to ICANN's mission.

ABDULRAHMAN ABOTALEB: Thank you. I'm sorry, I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Abdulrahman Abotaleb. This is just for record. And I am from Yemen, ICANN81 fellow.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Abdulrahman. Busayo?

OLUBUSAYO MARY BALOGUN: Thank you so much. My name is Busayo Balogun, first-time fellow, ICANN81 fellow from Nigeria. I'm happy to be here. I think mine is just a comment and it's just to appreciate the Board for this opportunity to be here to contribute to ICANN's mission. Because clearly, you see it as an opportunity for emerging voices like us to contribute to the ICANN's policy initiatives. And also to address global Internet governance problems. So thank you so much. I'm glad to be here. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Busayo. Sandra, please.

SANDRA RODRÍGUEZ: This is Sandra speaking and I will be speaking in Spanish. Thank you, everyone. First of all, I am Sandra Rodriguez. I am from El Salvador. And I would like to take a couple of minutes to let you know what it means for me to be here in this room with the ICANN Board. I am the first fellow from El Salvador. So this is an honor to be representing not only the academia, but also the technical community in this role. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity. I had participated as an observer in ICANN76. This is a very important opportunity for me.

I had always shared the fellowship application links within my networks. And I applied on the very, very last day and I got selected. So what a pleasant surprise. I am really, really grateful and I hope I will make a valuable contribution.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Thank you, Sandra. It's a pleasure having you here. Mayssam?

MAYSSAM SABRA: Thank you. I have a short question, simple, but it might be not simple.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: And your name, please?

MAYSSAM SABRA: Mayssam, my name is Mayssam. So I would like to ask the Board, if you would have the chance to change something about ICANN, what would it be? And please, I'm looking forward to a very transparent answer, please. Thank you.

TRIPTI SINHA: I would get rid of time zones, so everyone could participate.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: Tripti stole my answer. Yeah, I think time zones and travel are the huge challenges for this kind of work. I think working at a global scale, yeah, if we could work on teleportation as a next technology, that would be really helpful.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Sally?

SALLY COSTERTON: I would make ICANN Learn like an embedded thing in everybody's head. So this is Betsy, she runs the ICANN Learn program. She is a lady waving. I was loving to hear you talking about ICANN Learn early and you were also mentioning it, Catherine. That is, I think, us being able to all understand the same thing at the same time would be incredible, and then if we also combine that with no time zones and teleportation, I think we're sorted.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. And related to ICANN Learn, even when I'm asking Betsy, "Okay, this is the list of the courses which I will suggest to fellows, and what are other suggestions you may tell me?" And she said, "Okay, go and have a look at this ten, take them and tell me which one you want." So we all are taking courses, ICANN Learning courses. This is the way. Edmon?

EDMON CHUNG: Yeah, very good question. In fact, I was asked a very similar question just earlier in the week, asking me if I have three magic wands for ICANN, what would I do for it? So I'll repeat that for you, not in full. One is the radical responsiveness at the Board and the community policy recommendations, but that's too boring. The other one was the radical transparency of the ICANN Board. That's also boring. The third one I want to talk a little bit about.

ICANN, since its beginning, has been under kind of a threat of its own existence by international organizations, because ICANN just don't fit in. We are a multi-stakeholder, bottom-up organization that is not government-driven, which is like the multilateral UN system. My magic wand was to wish away for that and have ICANN be, have ICANN have the sustainability and remove the threats forever, and allow the multi-stakeholder model, bottom-up model, to continue to thrive.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Ida, please.

IDA PADIKUOR:

Thank you, Siranush. My name is Ida Padikuor. I'm a first-time fellow, ICANN81, and I'm from Ghana. So before I begin, I just want to say thank you to the Board for making this possible and for coming here today to speak to us. My journey here has really been an exciting one. I've learned so much, and I highly recommend this program for anybody who wants to understand how ICANN works. I like the fact that it's a guided learning experience.

But my question is, post the fellowship, can we have a guided mentoring experience? Is there a plan? You know, there was a talk on the SSAC internship sort of thing. So I just wanted to know, is there a plan to have a guided mentoring experience? Because I believe it will make things easier for us, because right now there's so many lines of interest. And there's so many things you want to learn about and know about. But then having a guided mentoring experience would help us know things a bit.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN:

Thank you. Thank you. If Board members would like to add, but being a program manager for this, the motto we have, once a fellow, always a fellow, that's just not simply the words. We do consider post-fellowship engagement, and we do have some plans for you. So this is your first ICANN meeting, and there are more to come. Once you are in, there is no way out, as I usually say. Yes, Chris, please.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE:

Look, I think formal mentoring programs are wonderful. And we actually, so I've now been on the Board for one year, and we have a very formal mentoring partner relationship with other Board members. So actually, Jim Galvin, who is sitting in this seat before me, has been my mentor over the past year, and it's been hugely, hugely helpful. But I think the other thing as well is sort of more informal mentorship relationships are also really valuable. I think having the group of NextGen and fellows, you make a lot of new relationships and you can support each other on that sort of learning and development journey. We're also, in the grand scheme of things, not a very big community. So you make a lot of new contacts and relationships at these meetings and can follow up on subsequent meetings. So I think use those, talk to people, ask questions. There really is the possibility to have a really valuable, informal mentor-mentee network.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN:

And actually, we do have this mentoring guided learning before coming here. But I do agree with Chris. Every single ICANN meeting, we have a new group of fellows. So one group is coming, learning, and going forward, moving forward. We have mentors who will continue to support during some course of time, but that's why this networking and these connections will help you to go further. Edmon, yes, please.

EDMON CHUNG:

Yeah, adding to that, actually, beyond the ICANN fellowship, there are many other types of fellowships and programs that is related to Internet governance. So you should definitely look into things like the Youth IGF,

like the Internet Governance Forum, the National Internet Governance Forums, as well as, well, of course, the regional ones. Our organization, for example, operate the Net Mission Program. I know that there are some Net Mission alumni around the table. And also, for Asia Pacific, at least, there is the Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy. There are also schools on Internet governance around the world. Those are good next steps as you go into the journey, both at ICANN or the broader Internet governance discussion.

There's also youth networks, which are Youth Internet Governance Forum, alumni often, as well as leaders that run Youth Internet Governance Forum around the world. So I think you can talk to Suchita about those as well.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Edmon. Catherine?

CATHERINE ADEYA: Well, just a quick one, because I think some of you had spoken to me earlier also in trying to understand this. Just for the clarity on, I think, what you're asking, is if there could also be some kind of targeted mentorship. I remember what you're asking, so I'm trying to ask for you. And I think, Suchita, and what you're saying, you're asking for something more than slightly what is already there in the mainstream. So for example, how would somebody like here maybe offer some kind of mentorship? And I think somebody suggested, was it you? You were

suggesting things like maybe having some kind of database of past fellows who may be willing, or people who are out there.

So for example, Suchita, I mean, I worked with Onika. She must have been with you people. Now she's a senior person in GDIP in South Africa. So it's just knowing where these people are. They may no longer be coming around here, but they could also be inspirational in your journey. So I think that's what you are also asking. Am I correct? Okay.

LEON SANCHEZ:

If I may add, and this is something with which I close usually, but I always tell the fellows that I'm only a click away. So Siranush has my information. You can reach out anytime. Sometimes it might take some time for me to get back to you, but I will. That's something I always do. So don't be shy, reach out. If I can be of any help, I'm happy to do so.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN:

Thank you. Oyinkan, please.

OYINKAN REBECCA ADEBIMPE: Thank you. My name is Oyinkan from Ireland, first time fellow as well, ICANN81. My question is really to the Board around your journey through ICANN. I think it's important to learn not just from your successes, but also from pitfalls and failures, if any. So I wanted to know, in terms of your journey learning and growing with ICANN, if there's any, not necessarily advice, actually I'm hoping more for a story.

But yes, any lessons that we can pick from things that you've experienced so that we can avoid them as fellows?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Tripti? Okay, they need time to think about this.

LEON SANCHEZ: No, I mean, yeah, I'll go next to you. I think that a failure is only a failure when you don't learn out from that failure, right? So at some point, I said I applied four times to the fellowship program. I was in I3, I was successful on the fourth. So that was a pitfall for me. And at some point, I was losing motivation to continue. But I said, no, this is something that I really want, so I continue going.

Now, on my ICANN journey, of course, I've made a lot of mistakes. A lot of mistakes. But I have been so lucky as to have people that have embraced me, and guided me, and taught me whatever I needed to learn. And so I think that the main thing here, as I think Chris was saying is that you remain open and that you are able to be taught on a continuous basis, right? Whenever you think you know, you don't know, right? So just keep your mind open, keep observing, keep learning, keep absorbing knowledge from others.

And also, I think that one of the most valuable lessons that I've learned belonging to this community is to be respectful of others, respectful of cultural differences, right? When I first came here, I made many mistakes in that end because I assumed that what was funny for me

would be funny for others and it was absolutely not that way. So I learned it the hard way but I think I've learned through those pitfalls.

TRIPTI SINHA:

I agree. Leon has learned to appreciate vegetarianism. So in terms of, I think earlier there was a question, what's the biggest barrier? Honestly, the biggest barrier might be yourself. In other words, it's all in your own mind. There's nothing you can't do. That's probably your single biggest barrier. And to add to what Leon was saying, ICANN is fundamentally a technical organization and technology moves at lightning speed right now. So stay in touch and don't get obsolete. Obsolescence will basically kill anyone's career so make sure you stay at the cutting edge at all times and whatever your focus is, stay on top of it.

CATHERINE ADEYA:

Actually, I didn't want to call it failure but I would also call it learnings and I would share some of the learnings that I've also shared with my daughter who's about the age of some of you when she goes for meetings. I always tell her don't keep moving into familiar territory. Go into places you're uncomfortable about. Build your social capital. Build your networks because these networks and the social capital is what helps later on.

So for example, you are so lucky. I don't know about Tripti and the rest but the days I started going for meetings like your age, everything was on paper. So they would send you an attachment on email but you can go and check the schedule. You can check who's coming. You can

target who I might want to speak to to make sure I don't leave. Yesterday, somebody refused me to leave. It was some of them, the tea corner there because they had planned they were going to talk to me and checked exactly where I was going to be. And it's not bad because then you build your networks.

So I'm saying when I look back at myself, I wish sometimes, you might not believe it Tripti, I used to be shy. I wish I was not so shy. I used to be shy and I was so scared. I used to admire people like this, look at them from a distance and forget what took me to that meeting. So I know you're not shy but don't be shy and just feel free, look at it, reach out to people. The most somebody will tell you is I'm busy now or you can get my contacts or find something else but don't be shy, reach out.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN:

Thank you and the last question I want to take from one of our ICAN81 fellows who was rejected, who had visa issues and couldn't come but she accepted the virtual fellowship so she participated with us. Saba, if you can unmute yourself and take the floor.

SABA TIKU:

Thank you very much Siranush. Hello, my name is Saba and I'm an ICAN81 fellow from Ethiopia, first time fellow. Yes, as Siranush said, unfortunately I couldn't join you on site due to visa issues but I'm really enjoying the sessions as a virtual fellow. So first of all, I would like to say thank you to the ICANN Board and the ICANN community in general

for this wonderful opportunity and for your advice as well on how to keep engaging in the organization.

So my question is actually, could you share like a memorable experience from your time on the Board that really captures what ICANN is really like, what ICANN means to you so that we as a fellow can learn from it. Thank you very much.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Saba. What ICANN means to you? Who would like to take the means to you? Chris?

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: All right, thank you. Well, first a shout out to Saba as my fellow member of the IGF multi-stakeholder advisory group. I'm very sorry not to have you here Saba but I'm glad that you're still taking part remotely. It's a really tough question for me actually. I think for me the last year being on the Board has been a real eye-opener into how many different moving parts there are in the ICANN space. I think I've worked for about two decades in the regional internet registries, so in the numbers policy space and it is plenty complicated. There's plenty of issues and sort of contentiousness there. ICANN brings all of that technical difficulty and questioning and policy making and then throws in a huge range of other issues, whether it's intellectual property, whether it's business interests, whether it's geopolitics.

And so I think being in a position to actually engage productively with those discussions that are happening at a nexus of so many different

issues and in relation to a technology that is so central to our societies is a huge privilege. And more than a privilege, it's a fascinating experience. So I think if you have the chance to dig deep into it, I really encourage it and I thank you all for being here and taking up that opportunity.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Edmon?

EDMON CHUNG: Yeah, great question and when you asked it, I was just thinking back on my term on the Board. One of the first challenges when I got on the Board was the war in Ukraine broke out and we never thought that it would have implications to ICANN, but it did. But I think what it means - your question is what it means to, I guess, participate in ICANN, what does ICANN mean? In my mind it's really to be able to transcend some geopolitical issues and keep this internet that we love, keep this open, interoperable internet alive. And that's part of ICANN's job and that's why I think ICANN is meaningful.

Although we just play a very small role in the coordination of internet identifiers, unique internet identifiers, but that in itself and keeping it transcending different cultures and different geopolitical issues is something I find really meaningful, especially coming from Hong Kong and sitting in Hong Kong and facing the different kind of repressions that is happening. ICANN is an oasis for me. ICANN is a place where ideas can come from the bottom up and get implemented in an open

and interoperable internet around the world. That, I think, is a very important part of at least my belief and what's meaningful for me about ICANN.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Edmon. Sally?

SALLY COSTERTON: Thank you. What a good question. I think it's a very kind of philosophical question, actually. For me, Saba, I think, a little bit building on what Edmon was saying, what ICANN means for me is a unique opportunity to experience this incredible experiment in human decision-making. Because what we do here, this process by which we come together from all over the world, bottom up, and we solve problems. We solve technical problems, we solve legal problems, we solve operational problems, and we solve them in a way that they are sustainable and implementable to keep the internet safe and secure.

And focusing on the first bit, we come together to solve problems. And in my experience, there is nothing like this. There are other organizations that do some of the things we do, but at the scale we do it, and the pace and the complexity, and the way that we insist on involving the voice of all our stakeholders, that is something that I think is not just something for us, but for the world. And we show that it can be done. Even times when we look at things and we think this is too difficult, we can't get there, we do get there. And that is a source for me of fascination, endless fascination, but also enormous pride. Because

you feel not just pride in protecting the mission, but that we've got this, we know how to do this, and we know how to do it, and others can rely on us being able to do that.

And being part of that process, and finding that common ground and the satisfaction that you get when you agree, and you can say we have consensus, is very special. And I think that's what it means to me, is that opportunity to do that work in that way.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Sally. And I don't want us to leave this session without giving an opportunity to our young student, NextGenner, Nitish, if I'm not wrong with the name.

NITISH REDDY YERRADODDI: Hi, I'm Nitish from India, a NextGenner at ICANN81. The question regarding post-fellowship was addressed, but this is about pre-fellowship and NextGen, basically. It was very difficult for me to figure out about NextGen or ICANN fellowship application. Thankfully, Barkha, who is an ex-fellow, somehow helped me because I found her on LinkedIn and asked her a couple of questions and asked her to help me. But I just wanted to know if there is any project or an initiative, like a hack and use for Y Combinator community, where there could be open Q&A, mainly for the Gen Z and millennials to just come there, ask questions about fellowship or the NextGen program, and the ex-fellows can actually go answer them. Right now, I know that there's Q&A, there's a lot of information on ICANN website, but an interactive chat or

thread kind of a system will be more helpful to reach out to more people. Thank you.

TRIPTI SINHA:

Thank you very much for the question. It's a great idea. We just have a couple of opportunities, but we will think about opening more opportunities. We do have email addresses where you can send an email and ask about that, and we also have frequently asked questions about the programs posted on our website, but definitely there are some specific program-related or application-related questions which we will think about how open more opportunities for asking questions and getting feedback from the programs. But thank you for the question and for the suggestion. Any? Yes, please.

CARRISA TEHPUTRI:

Good afternoon. My name is Carissa, and I'm an ICANN81st NextGen. I'm from Bali, Indonesia, and I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to be here. So my question is, I've been trying to think of ways to contribute to ICANN after this NextGen, and I've been looking at different groups. I attended information session, and the first group that really attracted me was the SSAC, because I thought it would be aligned with my international security policy background.

But then after attending the session and reading more about it, I realized that the threshold for the technical background is pretty high. Meanwhile, even though I'm an artificial intelligence consultant, I err more on the policy side. So my question to the Board member is, for

NextGenners or fellows who are like me, who are in tech, but then we're not engineers, so we don't have very high technical background, is there a recommendation on like which group should we start with? Do we just jump in head first and be a sponge and then hope for the best? Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Unfortunately, Jim left. He was the liaison to SSAC, but I will take your question and get back to you, definitely. And Socheata, I saw your hand as well.

SOCHEATA SOKHACHAN: Thank you for the opportunity. My name is Socheata. I'm ICANN81 fellow, and I'm from Cambodia. And I feel like I'm the youngest one in the fellow, because I'm just in my bachelor degree in my final year. Actually, I applied for both tracks, NextGen and Fellow, and I didn't expect that I accepted in fellow tracks. However, I would like to appreciate to Edmon for his organization that made me see the world. I started in internet ecosystems with APICA and then to NetMission, and now I'm engaged with more organizations from APNIC and now ICANN.

I really love this community, but since here I'm interested in a lot of communities and groups, but I would like to scope down. Eventually, when I'm here, Edmon also reached out to me, and he really made me realize that what I'm interested in. So I'm interested in IDNS, and I want to know more about this group, like is there any working group that youth or university students are eligible to participate in, and maybe

what skills are required for me to participate in this group? And that's it for my question.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Edmon, please.

EDMON CHUNG: Thank you, Socheata. So I don't recall any particular working group, but I recall that--sorry, I forgot your name from Canada. Dana?

DANA CRAMER: Dana, yes.

EDMON CHUNG: Dana. Dana suggested this youth advisory committee last time I saw you in San Juan, and this time you have another suggestion, which is really good. So actually, this is in response actually to the previous speaker as well from Indonesia. I forgot her name. And I think one of the easiest--well, in fact, it's okay to say it's easiest-- is to join the APRALO, the Asia-Pacific Regional At-Large Organization. That's from the large side of things, and individuals can actually join as members and participate. And in fact, although SSAC, of course, SSAC itself has a higher bar in terms of absorbing new members, however, APRALO or any of the RALOs or any of the At-Large structures can provide direct input into ICANN policies. In fact, ALAC, the At-Large Advisory Committee, also provides direct advices to the Board.

So your work, if you focus on security, that's okay. At-Large also can talk about security as well, and if you can participate in the-- Liana, you might be more familiar with me at this point-- there's a consolidated policy working group of some sort. Don't quote me the exact, but look for the policy working group, and they have multiple things that they look at ICANN policies and provide specific advice, or there are some public comment consultations happening, and they would provide statements into that, and that's where is the shortest path to meaningful contribution in my mind.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Yes, Leon, please.

LEON SANCHEZ: Just to add to what Edmon said, most of the work in ICANN doesn't take place at ICANN meetings. It takes place online, in between. So what Edmon is suggesting, I think it's a great idea to reach out to your At-Large regional organization and try to get involved, attend the meetings. The CPWG is something that I would definitely advise you to follow. And as for this idea of having a working group of either academics, young people, however you want to call it, things in ICANN grow out of a spark. They start small and they grow big, and this is where you as fellows can contribute to ICANN's mission. So you should be forming this group amongst you, and that group will naturally grow and become part of this community eventually.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. And we will take, indeed, the last question. Yeah, before I will come to you, Chris, and I will request the Board to respond briefly with a brief short call to action to all our newcomers here. Chris, before we go, and then Gustavo, you will be the next.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: I'll be very brief, Siranush, thank you. I just wanted to say, in looking at where you can engage and how you can sort of continue working in this community, the other important point is not just that work doesn't happen at ICANN meetings, but also that ICANN is part of an ecosystem. I mean, look to the regional internet registries and some of the issues that they're managing. They have their own meetings, which are also really valuable places. The IETF, I mean, it's a very technical space. It's certainly more technical than I'm used to, but also is looking into some really interesting issues in relation to human rights, for instance, alongside the very technical matters. So be broad-based in your approach. Look at all of the ways that ICANN connects to the broader digital space, also the Internet Governance Forum and all of those spaces as well.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. Gustavo, please.

GUSTAVO ORTEGA ALVARADO: Well, thank you for the Board for this opportunity. Thank you for supporting this great program. My name is Gustavo Ortega. I'm a fellow for the first time. And if you see what we have been doing this afternoon

in this session, well, basically we have been building a narrative. We started talking about success in ICANN. We talked about opportunities. We talked about next steps. And I think it's our responsibility to be part of this program, not only today, but also in the future. And my question specific to the Board would be this. What do you think, maybe if you can answer in a brief manner as well, what do you think is missing? That's my only question today. Thanks.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: What is missing where?

GUSTAVO ORTEGA ALVARADO: It's a general question.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: General. What is missing? Okay. Challenging. Okay.

LEON SANCHEZ: More parties.

EDMON CHUNG: I'm happy to get started. Well, first of all, what's missing is your participation, continued participation. And I do think so, because ICANN, if you think about it, I personally believe, and some people don't, but I do believe that a noisy ICANN is a healthy ICANN. We need to have the different voices coming in. The world has billions of users

online, but at ICANN, we have only a very, very small percentage participating here.

I don't think, don't get me wrong, I don't think every single one user needs to participate at ICANN. In fact, if that's the case, then ICANN has failed. ICANN is focused on something that's very small part that is critical for the internet, but at least we need enough new people coming in and learning about what we do, learning about what domain names and IP addresses are and why they are important for an open and interoperable internet. We need new people coming in consistently. Is it completely missing? No, we have people coming in, but we certainly can have much more.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Edmon. Leon, please.

LEON SANCHEZ: And just to complement what Edmon was saying, I think what's missing, in a way, is us reaching out, getting out of our bubble, right? And going to new spaces. I have my brain already burned up. But as my colleague was suggesting, as Chris was suggesting, and I think that's something that is missing. We need to get out of our bubble and go to talk to others in many different spaces and bring them in so they can understand what we do, where we come from, where we want to get. So I would suggest that we definitely reach out to more people.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. And if we can sum up this with a brief call to action, and to our newcomers here, Sally, if I can give the floor to you.

SALLY COSTERTON: I think it's the theme of this meeting is reach out, ask questions, and build your confidence ready to participate. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Catherine?

CATHERINE ADEYA: Call to action, evangelize, share what ICANN does. Let them come here and get to know more, or let them go out there and understand better what ICANN does. You are right now our ambassadors.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Chris?

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: I think Catherine actually said it very well. Looking around, I hope all of you come back for more ICANNs. I hope many, many of you do. Many of you probably won't. Just because we all have different professional paths that take us in different directions. But I think even as you go off in other directions, even if this is not the path that your career takes, take the knowledge of ICANN, the knowledge of this multi-stakeholder effort that we're working on, and apply that, share that elsewhere.

Because I think this is a really valuable space, and we can use all of the evangelizing that we can get.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you. And actually, I would like by closing this session also welcome two incoming Board members who are here with us, who will take their seats tomorrow actually. Yes, two Board members here. Three? Three, yeah. We welcome you and thank you for being with us. Yes, please.

DAVID LAWRENCE: David Lawrence, incoming IETF liaison. And the one thing I wanted to actually accentuate in everybody's answers about your path here and so far, if you just keep one short thought in your head, it's don't just learn, but do. Be active and participate. Just showing up is only the start of it. You have to be involved too.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Don't just learn, do it. So with this, I close this session. I thank all our Board members who are here. And with that, this meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

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