
ICANN82 | CF – ICANN Board and Fellowship NextGen@ICANN Participants
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 – 13:15 to 14:30 PST

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you. Thank you, everyone, for joining the special session with ICANN Board and ICANN Board members, Board chair and ICANN president and CEO. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you, to our panelists also, to our guests, the group of Fellows and NextGeners who are here to learn. For many of them, this is their first ever ICANN meeting in person and I hope they are doing great steps forward to learn about ICANN and bring back to their countries.

I know Tripti and Kurtis will have very limited time to be with us. That's why without further ado, I would like to give the floor to Tripti and then to Kurtis to welcome our group and then we'll come to our Board members. Tripti, the floor is yours.

TRIPTI SINHA

Thank you very much. So, I'd like to start by giving each and every one of you a very, very warm welcome and it's very important that we bring you, the next generation, into our ecosystem as fellows here because, let me be very honest with you, the internet is going to outlive all of us. So, it will. It will be here when we are all dead and gone. So, we have to make sure that generation upon generation comes in and keeps this infrastructure going, sustained and enriched and evolved and advanced and the

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

only way it happens is if each and every one of you participates from different parts of the world.

So, it's very important that you embrace this ecosystem, learn as much as you can, use whatever your skill set is. I'm sure each of you has a unique skill set. Believe it or not, this is called a multi-stakeholder model and what that means is you come from one particular group and you will find your place. And it doesn't mean that you have to operate just in that space. You can also connect with others across the ecosystem and contribute in multiple forums.

So, my advice to you is first, thank you again for coming in as fellows, embrace this experience, learn as much as you can, participate, talk to people, contribute. And I'm sure you're going to learn that some of your former Fellow members have advanced into high positions and one in fact sits on the Board today, Leon, and we've also had a past Board member who also advanced through the ranks and--

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

He is here as well

TRIPTI SINHA

Where is he? Oh, you're there. Hi, Lito. So, I'm sure you'll hear from them as well. So, again, a very warm welcome to you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Tripti. Kurtis, this is your first meeting as well, so welcome to the Fellowship and NextGen group and please, the floor is yours.

KURTIS LINDQVIST

It's not my first meeting. It's my first meeting as ICANN CEO. We had a meeting on Friday with one of the other groups and we had to tell the group what our ICANN age was, our first meeting. So, I had to go Google it and apparently it was 2005, I found out because I didn't remember. It was in Luxembourg in the airport hangar, so we come a bit at Sundays. Welcome, everyone. I think, as Tripti said, it's great to see you here. I had the opportunity to meet some of you last night at the social and had a chat with you, which was great. So, thank you for pulling me aside.

I think one of the things that is really fantastic about this is having there's both the fellows and the newcomers. And I think Tripti said that the internet will outlive us. I mean, me and Tripti are both very young, but it's still great to see an even younger generation than us join and come in because one, we need to have a continuous flow, but we need to ensure that there is interest, but also because other generations, other cultures, experiences, backgrounds will have a different perspective and bring more into the multi-stakeholder model, which as Tripti just outlined is a very fundamental part that the internet and the internet governance system is built on. And you are very much part of that.

And I think you're obviously here to listen, to learn and observe, but engage. You are here among this community. And the wonderful

thing about this community is that they are very open. We are valuing everybody's input, including yours. And that's how you learn. Don't be shy. Please, please, please do engage in the discussions. And when you go back to your home countries and your day jobs or activities, bring this with you and continue that work in your own country, engage locally, try and build that with your company or your local ISOC chapter, whatever that is, and really make sure you continue this journey because you have just started on a journey. And I started on this and I found it very hard to leave, but I'm still here many years later, but it's a fantastic experience to be here. So, I hope you make the most of that and I hope you enjoy it.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Kurtis, and welcome again. On my left side, there are two gentlemen who are here who are members of the Board and who will be here for the rest of the session today. But I do want to give you an opportunity to ask one or two questions to Tripti and Kurtis while they are here because they need to leave really very soon. So, one, two questions maximum. Yes, Paulo, please go ahead.

PAULO MARCOS DREWIACKI

Hi, Kurtis. Welcome to ICANN as the new CEO. I'm Paulo Marcos from NIC.br, NextGen mentor. And well, I asked a question in Hamburg about ICANN's marketing approach to domains. And well, I got an answer that ICANN doesn't do marketing. And well, knowing that you come from a marketing background, as well as I

am, what would be your view on ICANN's marketing efforts from now on?

KURTIS LINDQVIST

I think that's the first time anyone ever said I came from a marketing background. I think you're referring to that I used to work as a chief marketing officer for a while, but I have no marketing background. I studied computer science and I did an MBA, so I do have-- But look, we don't market. I wouldn't use the word marketing. There is an element of that, but I think what we do is outreach, right?

Take the Next Round, for example. We do a lot of outreach into the developing markets, if I want, or the global south, etc., as well as the existing markets to raise awareness of the new round of ICANN, what the values are behind gTLDs and having domain names and how do you build businesses, how do you support that. That's what we do.

I mean, the reason I distinguish is that we're not doing this to increase our revenue, right? We're actually doing this to raise awareness. That's actually our role. So, I think we had to distinguish that slightly there. And I think we'll continue with that. I think we could do more and I hope we will really do outreach also by the governance model of ICANN and multi-stakeholder model. And if I do want to market something, it would be that. That I would like to sell, but not necessarily domain names.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Georgia.

GEORGIA OSBORN

Hi, Kurtis, Georgia Osborn. I just have a question because I've been lucky enough to keep coming back and you've kept coming back. And so, my question is, if you could say anything that the reasons why you kept coming back to try and retain people who are also lucky enough to be here, what would you say has kept you and has brought you along for this time?

KURTIS LINDQVIST

That's a fantastic question. And I like to think this is unique to what we do. I'm sure other industries will say it's not, but I think it's unique. And that is that anyone who shows up here can actually participate. You can get engaged and you will get engaged. You'll make lifelong friends. You will feel value in this. And for me, it was very much that by being here, you're actually part of creating and continue to evolve this phenomenal thing that is the internet that creates so much value for humanity, for businesses, for the world. And you are a part of building that.

Your participation here today, you might not think so, but you're very much part of that creation. And I think that's what keeps drawing me into this is that in every small little bit you do, you are so much part of this. And yes, you can create value. You can change things. You can have an opinion. You will be heard. And I think that's one of the most fantastic thing about this ecosystem and the people here. And that's really what kept me coming back. And I'm

still haven't gone yet. And it doesn't look like I'll be going anytime soon. So no, it's really what keeps making me coming back.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And just to let you know, Georgia who asked this question, this is her first ICANN meeting, official as a Fellow, but she already engaged with SSAC, Security and Stability Group. So, this is the way to go. Rolla, please come close to the mic.

ROLLA HAMZA

Thank you. And sorry for being late. My question, I have two questions actually. Rolla Hamza for record and ICANN Fellow. I have two questions, actually. After your 90 days of your role, like ICANN role, CEO, what's your challenge that you face and how you face it? And the next question is, as a Fellow, how we can participate more and more after the fellowship? How can we, if you advise us, how we can participate more or engage more and contribute in the best way and have ICANN benefit from us as a Fellow? Thank you.

KURTIS LINDQVIST

My biggest challenge. So, I'm on day 94, so I clearly passed the 90-day mark. Look, I think one of the challenges, the Board will give me objectives and goals, I need to make sure I deliver on them. And we have a strategy plan that Maarten was chair of developing, and I need to deliver that for the Board. And of course, that's a challenge, right? But it's also why they pay me, right? I think one of the challenges for ICANN the coming year will be the WSIS+20

discussion about the future of internet governance. And I think that is a big challenge, not just for me, but for all of us. And we need to navigate that and need to build that. Delivering the Next Round on time will be a big challenge.

But I think more so is that I think, and that's something I think everybody has told me these 90 days is to ensure that we have a policymaking process that is timely and qualitative in the way that we actually remain relevant. I've said this a few times, and it's not the best analogy, but the multistakeholder model, ICANN is the shop window for that. What we do is very much how people view this. And I think we need to be very respectful of that and ensure that we can deliver on that and actually make sure that we work.

How you can continue to be engaged, there is many ways to engage. There is the At-large community, there is the RALOs, the regional At-Large groups, so you can get engagement. Depending on your background and what you do, there's many other groups in ICANN that you can join and participate in, either be if you work for businesses, the Business Constituencies, there's the ISPs. There's many, many, many ways to get engaged in ICANN and continue to do that.

And I said this last night, I really encourage you to continue to do that. And also, and by the way, not just by ICANN, you have the ISOC chapters, there's many other ways to keep getting engaged. I don't want to market ISOC, of course, but ICANN is better. We're very good friends. But you should this engagement and keep doing that. It's really what I hope you continue.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And I know you need to leave. Yes. Thank you very much for being with us. Thank you. Thank you very much. Okay, gentlemen. This is my immense pleasure to introduce Maarten Buttermann and Leon Sanchez. Leon, as Tripti mentioned, is a Fellow and a very good friend of mine. And we started as a Fellow together, we went through this road. And this is very important that he's here with us. And he's always coming back to support the fellowship program and serve as a role model for all of us. Leon, I would like to give the floor to you to say a couple of welcome words. And then we'll go to Maarten and then open the floor for questions.

LEON SANCHEZ

Thank you very much, Siranush. And welcome to all those first incoming Fellows. Welcome to those coming back. And yes, Siranush was saying-- And NextGeners, NextGeners too, sorry. Exactly. Back in the days, we didn't have NextGeners, so I guess that's why I forgot about it. But welcome to NextGeners as well. And as Siranush was saying, we started our journey, or at least I started my journey as a Fellow back in 2012, in the Prague meeting. That was my first fellowship.

And I guess it goes back to your question about how you retain people and how you are able to keep motivating them to come back and continually contribute to our ecosystem and our mission. And well, the way that I found was to apply for the fellowship. And I have to say that before becoming a Fellow, my first time, I was rejected to the program three times. So, that is like the first

milestone, right? Don't give up. Just keep trying. After my fourth application, I got admitted for the first time. And there I started my journey within ICANN.

After that I am an intellectual property attorney. That's what I do for a living. So, I thought that my natural place within the community would be the Intellectual Property Constituency. And God, I was so, so mistaken. And I did go to the IPC. I tried to find my place in that community. But I found out that even though my professional training would have steered me into that direction, my advocacy nature in regard to users' rights, etc., etc., didn't match that community.

So, I followed the advice that we got as fellows. Find yourself, find your place within the community. Go to as many meetings in diverse groups as possible. You might be surprised to find your place in a spot or in a group that you would otherwise would have never imagined you could fit in. So, give yourself the chance and the opportunity to explore new things. Give yourself the chance and the opportunity to get to know groups of people that wouldn't naturally see your place within this community. That's the second lesson. So, the first lesson is persistence. The second lesson is curiosity and openness to new ideas.

After that, I found my place in the At-Large community. So, at one of these many sessions that I attended, I attended the NomCom session. And in the NomCom, I realized that there were leadership positions being opened periodically so that anyone with, let's say, fresh blood could apply and come into this ecosystem via the

NomCom. So, I applied for an ALAC seat through the NomCom and I got appointed. And in the meantime, in parallel, I was also continuing to apply for my second and my third fellowship. So, my second fellowship was in Beijing. And my third opportunity to become a Fellow was in Argentina in Buenos Aires.

And at the same time that I was in my third fellowship, I was being seated officially as an ALAC member. So, match it perfectly. It'll match perfectly. And after that, I was very lucky to have people who continue to guide me, who continue to literally grab me by the hand as the fellowship program does with each of you, and nurture me in the leadership skills and knowledge that I needed to continue my path in this community.

After that, I was designated as the co-chair for the CCWG on Accountability back in 2016 when we were going through what we call the transition, which is the handover of the autonomy, if I may say, of the governance systems within ICANN from the backstop of the US. government to the Internet community. So, we build those accountability mechanisms so that the Board and the community itself would be accountable to the Internet community.

And after that, I saw the opportunity to nominate myself within the At-Large community to become a Board member. So, I won the election back then, and I have been a Board member ever since this very moment. I am now in the second year of my third term. So, that means that I am term limited. Next year will be my last year in the Board, but I, of course, intend to continue in both with the ICANN community and other groups.

So, one more lesson that I've learned about this is that throughout my journey within ICANN, I've learned that leadership positions are to serve our community and to serve the mission of the organization, of the ICANN organization, and the larger community we have as Internet stakeholders and Internet users. So, if you have access to a leadership position, seize the opportunity to serve the community, to serve the ecosystem, to serve and to uphold our mission. Those are the values that will ultimately take you to higher grounds and to enable you to, someone was saying, I think it was Rola, how can the organization benefit from us?

Well, that is the way the organization can benefit from us, from us being able to give back to the organization a little bit of what the organization brings to us with that spirit of service and delivering in our mission and dedicating and devoting time to our community and with our knowledge. So, those are my initial thoughts that I want to share to you. And again, you're welcome. I will stay for the remainder of the session and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Leon, and we are looking forward after your term ends in the Board, come back to the fellowship as a mentor. I would like to introduce Maarten Buttermann, who is a longstanding member of the Board and he was serving as a Board chair for three years. He is a great supporter of ICANN Fellowship and NextGen Program. He is a great supporter of newcomers. He's so open to welcome everyone who is coming for their first meeting and not only for their

first meeting, but and always graciously agree to come and join our session to meet with you and talk to you. Maarten, the floor is yours.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Thank you, Siranush. And I don't need to explain to you how grateful we are for having Siranush here in the room and mother y'all. So, one of the disappointments of a Board member is that during a week like this we are left and we were really happy to get the opportunity to break out of our Board duties to spend at least some time with you. I heard great things about the presentations from NextGen yesterday. There were really some very, very strong ones on DNSSEC and other matters and I would have loved to see that because the freshness that you bring is one of the things you bring to this community. So, the other thing, I'm not an ex-fellow, so I will never be a fellow, I guess. Once a fellow, always a fellow.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

You are not qualified as a newcomer.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

At the same time, what I do testify to is that this is a family that you grow into and grow into being friends. I see people in the room, former Board member Lito Ibarra, El Salvador. How could I have met him and become so close to my heart if it wasn't for this environment? Roberto Gaetano, former ex-chair of the Board and

living in Vienna, but his accent is very Italian. You've met him, so you know why I love him. I don't need to explain.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

He's a NextGen mentor.

LEON SANCHEZ

And if I may, Maarten, now that you mention Lito, Lito was the first Fellow to become a Board member.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Lito, can you stand up?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Hence the coat he took that way. And Chris Disspain on the right.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Chris Buckridge.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Chris Buckridge, sorry. Mr. Buckridge, an Australian who lives in Amsterdam. So, I met before we met on this Board. The lady in the middle happens to be my wife. Nothing to do with ICANN, but I love her too. So good to see you. And Albert, of course, if you like the Caribbean, make sure you talk with Albert. Ergis from the staff, learned to appreciate so much over time as well. Turkey-based, I think. Oh, DC. Oh yeah. You changed, right? You were always there. Sorry. And she moved to the US. too. And I missed that part. But anyway, this is one of the things. It's also family. Okay.

So, the other thing I would like to focus my little pull on is on the future. Who knows how the Internet will look like 35 years from now? Nobody? Well, for sure, 35 years ago, when I started, I had no clue how it would look like today. At that time, you didn't have a web. You didn't have mobile phones to connect. We used bulletin Board systems. Have you ever even heard that term? And modems that make it very noisy to make 2,400 about connections. And now we're talking megabits.

How this has turned out is amazing. You did get a feel already a little bit from science fiction, from The Matrix, from other movies that gives you a hint of where things could go. Virtual reality, a hint was there. Today, we're very close for it to be implemented. We have no idea where it's going to go 35 years from now. And no, I agree, it will be just dumb to think you can predict it. But what you can do is be part of its making. And this is why you're here in the room. You are part of its making.

ICANN's mission is very limited. It's really on the addressing system, security and stability of the addressing system of the Internet. And with that very important, we stick to that mission, because if we don't, if we get into content regulation, into other matters, who is going to take care of this mission? Because we'll get so much other things to do. But this is at the core of what makes the Internet be global. One World, One Internet.

We also have a feel of where we want the Internet to be in the future. Okay, not 35 years from now, five years from now. If you haven't read the strategic plan yet for 2026 to 2030, please do. It's

full with, I think, a very comprehensive thought, not only because we made it, but also because we made it together. And it's really pointing at the right points that we need to care about together. So please look at that. And that may inspire you also where you want to contribute, because now the plan is there, but we need to start implementing it. And part of that implementation is already on its way, but there's more to do.

So, the invitation is really to look at that. If you have any questions, ask anybody, but also for sure the Board members in this room, but also elsewhere. The first of you I met was on one of the receptions of ICANN. I recognize some faces. What you will have found there and what these people will be able to testify who made it there is how open many of us are to talk with you. So, use that opportunity. It will accelerate your learning and finding your place.

And last but not least, to create some time for questions as well, I want to point out that also this strategic plan has a strategic objective that is called evolve and promote ICANN's multi-stakeholder model to sustain its inclusive approach to internet governance. It's got two sides. One is make sure that this multi-stakeholder model that brought us where we are today, that brought us this stability that we have basically in delivering, needs to evolve. Otherwise, it will grind to a halt at some moment. So, we need to continue to innovate and improve and we're committed to that.

The other part of this coin is that we also need to make sure that the outside world understands that that's what we're doing and

that they can count on us, that they can continue to rely on us. During my chairmanship, I spoke more often for ICANN, my emphasis was always the internet works. And now we're going to talk of how we can make sure that continues. This is the thinking there.

In the strategic one, there is two specific actions that are really very relevant for you. One is we may continue with this program because 1.1.3 says foster an appealing environment for the next generation. An invitation to be here. But please also know 1.1.4, which says develop a new generation of leaders. What we often see in this environment is that people come back and stay and again and again, not always because they're so glued to their chair, but also because it takes an effort to find people that can take over and can step in. But that opportunity is there. And the opportunity is there for you. And if none of you is there in a couple of years of now, this will be a very old organization lacking new ideas.

And so please take those points to heart. Look at the strategic plan. Let it guide your contributions, your thinking, because your main contributions will not be this year or next year. They'll be in the years to come. And this is where you get up to speed and where you can start contributing already today by asking the right questions, by asking questions that we don't even think of anymore. And by coming with your impressions, your way of how you would like the internet to look like five to 35 years from now. So, with that, I'd love to give the floor to Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Maarten. Thank you very much. And thank you for noting that newcomers program are part of Board strategic objectives. So, this is an important component for ICANN to bring new friends, new faces, new blood, new voices. So here you are to make this happen. And as yesterday during the NS Women, one of the panelists who was 94 years old, the inventor of WHOIS, she said, we were here to invent internet. You are here to manage it. So, this is your time here. We will open the floor for questions. But before that, Chris Buckridge, would you like to say hello to our newcomers or you want to be in a listening mode? I just catch you on spot.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE

Hi, Siranush. Hi, everyone. Yeah, Chris Buckridge. I'm also a Board member halfway through my first term. So still getting my head around it all and enjoying it. Happy to be here in listening mode mostly, I think. But I've never had the opportunity to go through the Fellows program, unfortunately. But have certainly gained a lot of insight and inspiration from young people coming through these programs and also not just in ICANN. I think it's an opportunity to recognize that ICANN is part of a very broad network of different institutions and organizations and communities which overlap each other.

So, whether it's on the technical side in the Internet Engineering Task Force or the Regional Internet Registries or on the more sort of policy-oriented side, like the Internet Governance Forum and the National and Regional Internet Governance Forums, of which I think there are now 170 around the world. So, these all offer real

opportunities to continue the work that you're doing and starting here in ICANN and to take those in different directions, to look at what governments are doing, what public policy is doing, or to look at how protocols are being developed and can evolve. So, this, it really is just a starting point here. So, I encourage you to follow that up.

SIRANUSH VARDANYA

Thank you, Chri. And Maarten.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Yes, please let me add that Chris is also a MAG member and Lito is a MAG member, a MAG that is the multi-stakeholder--You're MAG, right? No, I was looking at Roberto because he's everywhere as well. MAC is the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group of the IGF, so they help determine the program. And if you have any questions, because the deadline for new sessions is 16 March now, ask them. And Chris comes also from the numbers 'community. He used the word for RIPE for many years. And Lito is from the ccNSO community, a numbers' community, because he's a Board member of LACNIC, as well as the founder and the current runner of .sv, I think, right? So, thank you for that.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

I think Lito is also considered as a father of internet in El Salvador. So yes, Lito is one, the first ICANN Fellow who became a Board

member. So Lito, if you can say a couple of words, that would be great. And thank you for joining us.

LITO IBARRA

Thank you. Thank you for the invitation. Yes, I used to be part of these two groups, the Fellow and NextGen members and the Board members. It is a little bit different because once a fellow, you are always a fellow, but once a Board member, you're not necessarily a Board member forever. But anyway, it was a great pleasure to be a fellow. I was an ICANN Fellow in 2008 and 2009. So, I still have one more opportunity. So, I will apply for another fellowship. And then I become an ICANN Board member in 2015. So, I have enjoyed that part of my personal history.

And I want to mention something, or a couple of things. One of them is I experienced what is called the imposter syndrome when I joined the ICANN Board the first time. Because I started to think, what am I doing here? Am I qualified to be part of the ICANN Board? And I had to answer myself, well, somebody put me here. Somebody appointed me to the Board, to the ICANN Board, so they must have seen something that I need to take out and be a good ICANN Board member, which I think I did.

So, that may happen to any of you at some point. If you are challenged by your positions, by the things you decide to work on once you select what part of ICANN you would like to join, you may think, oh, this is too big for me. This is too large for me. But no, remain confident in yourselves, and you surely will do a great job by paying attention, by doing your homework, interacting with the

people that crosses your life. So, you will learn and teach the people you interact with.

And the other thing I would like to say is something that I used to say when I was in these meetings, being part of the ICANN Board, to the fellows, you are privileged. You are certainly very privileged. You have the opportunity to come here, to speak with people with more experience, or maybe different experience, different backgrounds, different countries, different regions, different situations, all about regarding Internet. Some of you may have problems, troubles in your countries of any kind, some of you may have not, may not, but you have the privilege to learn from all of those. So, take advantage of that privilege.

And also, if you want to be thankful for that, for that opportunity, go back to your country and start your community, start with your friends, with your colleagues, do some events. I will give you a personal example. In El Salvador, we have been celebrating the Internet Day, May 17, for 17 years in a row. What we do, we call, we organize events throughout the whole week. This year, it will go from May 12 to May 17. And we have different events in different universities, different enterprises, different companies, different civil society organizations. They come together and they share their thoughts, their experiences.

And that is a way for you, all of you, to go back to your countries, to your communities, and start spreading the word, if you are not doing it by now, spreading the word about ICANN, about Internet, about Internet Governance Forums, Internet Society, and so on.

There are many places and things you can do to be thankful for what you are receiving through this week and more.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Lito. Thank you very much. And now we'll open the floor for questions. Please, raise your hands. Yes, let's start with you.

LULIA-MELISSA GIT

Hello, my name is Lulia and I'm a fellow. You all obviously went on to enjoy very impressive careers after being a fellow. And I was curious, how long did it take you to find your place within the ICANN community? Because I know you mentioned you moved between communities, and this is all very overwhelming at the beginning, so I'm very curious to hear that. Thank you.

LEON SANCHEZ

It really didn't take me that long. I think after my first meeting with the IPC, I found out that I didn't belong there. So, with all due respect to my IPC colleagues, but I found that my place was with the end-user community, which is the At-Large community. And at the time I was also doing a lot of advocating for users' rights back where I live in Mexico. And it just seemed like another natural place for me to come and to contribute with what I was doing back home. So, I didn't take that long to find out that my right place was the At-Large community.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you. Any other questions? Yes, please, go ahead.

MABDA HAERUNNISA

Thank you. This is Mabda for the record. And thank you, Lulia and Maarten and other Board members who are here. I'm very privileged to hear from you and how your experience has been. My question would be, I'm very fortunate to know that, at least in my region, there are several capacity-building programs that are being initiated by ICANN, and they have been very helpful in serving as an entry point for me and other youths as well in getting to know ICANN and in getting familiar with the community.

So, you, especially Maarten, mentioned about the strategic plan for the subsequent years, which will be in 2026 and 2030. My questions would be how would you improve on the existing capacity-building programs that ICANN already has, and especially in terms of ways to expand your outreach and making sure that you can bring people into the ICANN community more. Aside from what do you think you need to improve, what gaps have you observed in the previous years, and how do you plan to address those shortcomings? That would be my question. Thank you.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Yes, thank you for that. First, do not limit yourself to ICANN in your early orientation. There's also Internet Society, and there's a lot of schools of Internet governance around the world, and there are some excellent ones, and sometimes even the pleasure of being

there. It's a wider picture in which the ICANN mission is a focus one that is worthwhile pursuing.

So, what we try to do is to make sure that it's accessible to all by also being more and more online. So, a lot of your engagement can already be online next to being in meetings. And of course, meetings are different. Meetings is where you meet face-to-face with people, and you can ask the little question that is in the back of your mind. But it's not the only place. So, combine that.

We are very much aware of the fact that we are a global community. We are to serve the globe. One of the big challenges we have is, for instance, to deal with time zones and meetings. If you're in the same room, who cares, right? Particularly during the COVID period where we had a couple of years of only online meetings, yes, I've been up in the middle of the night too, but not as often as the people from Central East Asia. They've been much more in the middle of the night in inconvenient times. Whereas what we see if in this world, whereas in 2000, more than half was North American on the internet. That picture has totally changed right now, and most people are actually from Asia. The biggest growth is in Africa, which happens to support my time zone because I'm from Europe. But these are things.

We are actively reaching out. Also, the meeting strategy affects that by purposely going around the world in different, different notes. And also, in our strategic plan, again, I call your attention to that even in enhanced organizational excellence, we recognize the need to better serve all in the world and involve all. Now, I don't think

the ICANN Board should include people from every region, but we do need to be aware of the different issues in different regions. And sometimes it's represented by one, sometimes by more. In the community, it's the same thing.

ALAC is the one which has very clearly a global footprint with the ALAC chapters that are around the world, sometimes combining with ISOC chapters, but not always. And the GAC is another obvious thing. If you have a government career, keep your eyes open for the option to participate to these kinds of global things, because I think global ultimately is the future, even if you see right now a world that is becoming more multipolar. So, I hope that helps a little bit.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Yes, please, Saima.

SAIMA NISAR

Hello. Dr. Saima Nisar here for the record. And thank you so much for everyone, especially the Board members, who are giving us so much valuable information. First of all, I would like to give you the information that I'm basically from Pakistan, and I live in Malaysia since many years. Actually, my question is related to two different regions and two different countries. Like in Pakistan, I hope you know, we are in ICANN, we are working for internet, but in Pakistan, we faced a lot of issues of internet disruptions and lockdown.

And as in Pakistani, we, many youth fellows, many youth people are working as in virtual, like working from home. And for them, internet is a life. We cannot survive a minute without the internet.

And suddenly when there is an interruption, and we don't know when, until when it will be stay. So, it means nobody in the other world who is giving you this job will going to wait for you. Maybe you will lose this job. Maybe next time you will not get this job. So, we can face kind of these issues.

And apart from that, now the technology is moving a lot. Everything is moving towards to the AI. Every student needs internet to study, to learn. And when suddenly there is no internet, it can affect the primary education as well. And I give you the information that I live in Malaysia. Why? Because I'm living there, I can see the two different world. I belong from one world, I'm living in another world, and I see the difference, how much privilege to be in the one part, not very far, but how much it is a big problem in another part. So, as an internet organization, what do you think about that? How we can overcome this one?

And secondly, one thing, usually we don't have more this meetings, interactions in this part of the region, especially when I'm talking about Pakistan. I know there is a security issue and some other thing. Now the situation is much better, but still we need a lot of management. But I would highly suggest or recommend, at least from the specifically from the ICANN, we really need capacity building programs here. I know it's a tough thing, but I really want ICANN to look on these countries specifically, because we have a lot of talent. We have a lot of good students who know technology, who really want to learn. I know there's some sort of stereotype

that in our country, people don't want to study. There's no privilege to have studies or technology. It's 90% our stereotype.

We have a lot of talent, but we really need to have resources to support. And not just from the government, but specifically IGF, ICANN, these kinds of organizations. So, I really want you to know what you are planning, if you have any plan, or what you suggest, how we can do more for our countries or especially the developing countries. And I think it can be related to any other developing countries. Thank you so much.

LEON SANCHEZ

If you want to know what you can do, take action. Take action and grab the situation yourself. And if you need capacity building, you do the capacity building. Come to us for support. We will support you. Yes. We have Global Stakeholder Engagement Team, who is excellent. Siranush is part of that team. And ICANN does a lot of efforts to bring capacity building to literally every corner of this world. But there's also limits to that, of course, right? And we are currently facing financial challenges within the organization. So, we need to also prioritize and organize in the best way possible how we distribute these resources, how we provide this support for the different initiatives.

ICANN, as far as I know and as I remember, puts in a lot of money into organizing events like the Universal Acceptance Day events. So, that is one of the many ways in which you can provide capacity building at that layer. But if there is no one doing that where you live, then that's why I call you to take action and be yourself the one

that takes the initiative and bring us down there and say let's do this together. And we will be open and we will be happy to support you in that initiative. And I'm sure that you will find others that will join you in that effort. And in a collaborative way, we will be able to provide that capacity building.

Now as to the situation and the challenges that Pakistani citizens face in regard to accessibility to the Internet, you have to remember and we need to all remember that ICANN does a very small part of enabling the Internet to be. We are not necessarily in the connectivity layer or the connectivity space. We are more a protocol and technical organization. And towards that end, you could also refer as Maarten was saying to maybe ISOC. ISOC is more into the connectivity topic and provides also support and programs to enable this connectivity at different levels and at different layers.

But in the end, we're all in this together. And what I would encourage not only you, but everyone who's sitting at this table is to embrace the core values from the Internet. We just had a session on Internet core values, a couple of hours ago. And embrace those values and try them where you live and share them with others and share your knowledge with others so that everyone can embrace these principles and together work towards an open, reliable, sustainable, secure Internet.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

No, as Leon says, it's a little bit more next to, this is where ITU also comes in, in their development program. And the other thing next

to reaching out to us within your country, there's also some excellence that you can reach out to. There are some excellent Pakistani playing a major role in the Internet too. And I just checked with Siranush, but she confirms there is capacity building programs. ICANN would indeed, as Leon said, reach out. We do so with Digital Africa initiative as well, for instance, in the African region, very actively working with African Union and other Africa's players to get people up to speed, to get people connected.

Last but not least, it's true that the digital divide is with AI maybe changing again. The more of us are connected to the Internet, the deeper the divide gets to those who are not as well. And the quality of the connection and the access to facilities is indeed important. We see movements there, sometimes nationals, but a lot of international there too. Initiative, as Leon said, yeah, go for it. There's a lot out there to help and find your way, find your partners in that. And you find part of these in ICANN and part of these maybe even in Pakistan, in your own country yourself.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Maarten and Leon. And definitely, just to emphasize that we have regional stakeholder engagement team and they do a lot of capacity building. I will give you the contacts of our team in Asia Pacific and Middle East, and you will get in touch and you will find out. You can also invite experts from ICANN to come, speakers to come, but we definitely have the core team based there to come and help you with that. Yes, if follow up very briefly.

SAIMA NISAR

I really want to add just this one thing. I understand what you said. It's not 100% related to ICANN, Internet Society, IT involved. I just want to highlight one point. As you said, we have a support. You can do the capacity building. We usually have in Asia Pacific, for example, we have NetMission, which is doing really well. They are trying to provide the platform to all, especially the youth. But there's one thing. Let's say we are having a virtual meeting on Zoom and suddenly the internet gone. There's an internet drop. So, the platform is there, opportunity is there, but because of lack of connectivity, they were not able to connect.

And in November in ICANN, there was two fellow, the NextGen I know from Pakistan. They didn't get the visa, so they were not able to give to here. And they were not able to attend properly online as well because of this connectivity issues. So, I know this is not 100% here, but I really want to keep my voice here to be heard. Maybe many people are hearing here and I hope I will get to know more about this discussion and I will definitely will connect with you. Thank you so much, everyone.

LEON SANCHEZ

And we hear you. We hear you and we feel your pain because believe me, as someone who comes from a developing country as well, I too have issues getting visas. I too have challenges getting connected. And I couldn't agree more with you, but we also need

to recognize that we can control what we can control. We cannot control what we can't.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And actually I wanted to add this. I myself from developing country, I faced this visa issue for the last 15 years. I got several times rejected for Canada participation in our Toronto meeting. I was rejected to go to Schengen zone. So, this is, we all face this issue, but exactly, we cannot control what we cannot control. But thank you. We really hear you. Filimoni, please go ahead.

FILIMONI PELENATO

Thank you for the opportunity. Filimoni Pelenato from Samoa for the record. And I'm also a fellow, first time ICANN participation as well. First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the ICANN as well as another better person, Siranush, to lead us in this space. So, we're very grateful to be here. I'm very grateful to be here, especially from the Pacific islands.

My question was, I said in one of the community sessions and budget was being discussed and a lot of challenges that the ICANN is facing. Should this be a concern for us participants who are new into the space? I feel like there are many ways to address some of the budget issues that are happening. And I just wanted to ask, given the deficit report last year on your previous fiscal year, what steps is ICANN taking to ensure that this is not a concern for newly members or new participants that are entering the space of ICANN? Thank you.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Let me. It is a concern and we are seeking how we can adjust. For the first time ever last year, ICANN had to let go of some people because up to that moment, we only had increasing budgets and now we saw that stall, whereas price inflation has led to much higher costs. And we are a non-profit organization that needs to make ends meet. So, to find a way forward there is crucial. So, thinking new ways is important. It was extra painful for us, first because it never happened before. And secondly, because people at ICANN don't only work for the money. I would say 99.9% is there because they really care about what they do as well. It makes it extra difficult. We need to review that.

At the same time, it also means that we need to look at how we set our priorities towards the future. If you look to the strategic plan, you see some of our priorities and having next generations on Board, having new leadership, ensuring that we reach those areas that we haven't reached before. The inclusivity is at the top of our agenda as well. So, within what is possible, we will continue what we can in this. And yes, NextGen is a priority. And the fellows.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Fellows and NextGen. Newcomers. Newcomers program, we say that. Any other? Yes, Paulo. Brief.

PAULO MARCOS DREWIACKI

Just to add to Leon's point, answering your question. Khadija, one of the NextGeners, did a great presentation about the gender divide

in Pakistan, her experience. So, you two should get together and see where it takes you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Yes. Thank you, Paulo. Great point. And Khadija, I was present at that presentation yesterday. Talk to her. There is definitely a space to share the concerns. There is a question from an online participant, [inaudible - 00:59:17]. What role does ICANN see young leaders playing in shaping future DNS policies and the internet governance discussions? If you can take it.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

I think it's key. It's key for young people to step up and not to assume that they're not experienced enough. Or if you feel you have something to bring, you have something to bring. And that starts with online. That continues by participation in face-to-face meetings with the right communities that you feel drawn into, where you feel you can contribute most.

But I'm really hoping to see at some point somebody under 30 entering the Board as well. Not in my hands. But I think the realization of that diversity is not only male, female or regional. It's very much there. We have different generations with different thinking. And it's very important that we keep track of that. So, the sky is the limit. And as Leon said earlier, if it doesn't work this year, try again next year. But persist. I'm convinced personally that we need to have also different generations speak up and contribute.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you. Songo, please go ahead.

SONGO NORE

Yeah, thank you. Hi, everyone. I'm from Papua New Guinea. I don't know your name. You mentioned that we don't know what the internet will become in 75 years' time. So, I'm one of those political analysts that studies geopolitical tension between the East and the West. I've done a lot of research in the area. So, I'm very concerned a bit. What if we have another world war? And what if the nukes go off? Are we still going to have the internet in place? I'm just concerned. So, can you just clarify that? Thank you very much.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Just to remind, the name is Maarten Botterman, so you know. Maarten?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Yes, thank you. Alternative is if an asteroid hits the Earth. But then we don't worry anymore, I think. But I hear what you say. I'm convinced that whatever happens, and I think Tripti started opening with that, when we are gone, all of us here, the internet will still be there. Because it's such an invaluable resource and such a way of connecting across regions, across geographies. What may hinder is whether you're allowed to have access, or whether in practice you have access.

But I think with increasing low orbit technology and the landlines, the sea cables being very functional, they will still be there. And because of the structure of the internet to be such that it's a network, right? It's not based on connections between points. It's based on sending packages across, the packet switching. That means that it's incredibly robust. You may be aware of the root server that is at the core of sending around all these packages. There are certain root servers. But there is many, many instances of those root servers around the world. And even if your country doesn't have a root server in the country, you may have instances of root servers for multiple of those 13 root server providers. If one goes down, you won't even notice. If two goes down, who says?

My experience goes back to '97. There were only seven root servers. There are 13 today. One went down, two went down, and everybody of that technical community expected the internet to topple. It didn't. It went a little bit slower, but it continued. And fast forwarding to 2015, I heard from my friends from the root server community, there was another incident that took out multiple root servers. Again, if you would have been served by only one of those root servers, you might have a problem. But most of the world just carried on with the service.

And nowadays, only the ICANN root server would be able to probably carry all the transport of data in the world. And so could the Verisign one, and so could some of the other ones. The resilience is very much in the capacity and in the architecture of the internet. So, with that, and with the knowledge that it's so important for so many, even if China doesn't agree with North

American policies or European policies, what they all share, they want to be part of this one world, one internet. So, I'm convinced that with Tripti, that the internet will still function in those parts where life is still happening.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Maarten. Yes.

KASUN

THARAKA

WIKRAMASURIYA

Kasun. Actually, this is not just a question. This is one thing I need to explain. So, in here, there are Fellows and the NextGeners. We are in several domains. So, we are in several domain experts. So, to add to that Saima's questions for the capacity building initiatives, we can facilitate for each other. So, we have our knowledge, our contents, so we can provide our resource persons.

And also, we are in several organizations. Actually, I'm an inter ISOC member. And also, I'm in UN IGF, APR IGF too. So, we can facilitate each other. So, if you need any other engagement, like experts or contents or whatever organizing things, so those kinds of things, we can facilitate each other. As an example, I'm from Sri Lanka, so myself and also these Nepal guys, there are so many Nepal people here, we are planning to organize a regional IGF for the youth. Those kinds of things we can collaboratively organize for the capacity building.

So, I would like to invite all of you to engage and use this network to achieve our objectives. That means one world, one internet, and also the Inter Society for all those kinds of things. So, this is a kind

request to connect with each other and maintain this network.
Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Excellent. And this is the power of network and the power of you coming to one place and develop from here and taking back from here. So, thank you for this suggestion. And definitely, this is an example of moving forward. Any questions from this side? I don't see questions here. Khadija, let's go.

KHADIJA MIAN

Thank you so much. So, I'm Khadija. I had a question, and it's not going to follow from the previous questions. I actually wanted to know from the perspective of the Board, is the focus of ICANN now on strengthening and updating what already exists? So, like the root server system, is it on adapting to things like AI that are coming in? Is it on adapting to things like quantum computing? Where does ICANN really stand? Is it in securing it as it says it is? Or is it more trying to take a place in like being at the forefront of new developments and making sure that the infrastructure that exists is capable of supporting them? Like where does ICANN stand on this topic?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Thank you for the question. Our mission is to ensure stable and secure operations in internet-unique identifier systems. It doesn't say it needs to use this or this technology for that. And if you look at the strategic plan, you will very much see that we also follow

technical developments and try to learn from that. How it will impact us? How it will impact us to the future? We don't know. But also, on the OCTO pages on the website, you will find reports on blockchain, on AI, on different factors. We follow that, not because we see it as a threat to our way of doing things, but because we also want to learn from it, both on whether there could be elements of threat in there for the security stability, or whether it can help us enhance the way of working. So, for sure, it's an evolutionary model.

I personally don't believe in change of the whole protocol and approach overnight, because so many depend on it. Every change will go gradually through the network. An example is IPv6 instead of IPv4. We thought IPv6 would take over IPv4 by now, but 35 years ago. What we learn now is that they co-exist and other things are happening. So, for sure, an openness and an eagerness to follow developments, and both the root server community with their independent root server operations, they all focus on how to progress their role. And the ISSAC is also very much following the different developments. And so is ICANN. Chris, anything I forgot?

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE

No, I don't think it's nothing you forgot.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Yes, thank you. Next.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE

Yeah. No, what I would say is I think there are different facets to ICANN. And I think there is obviously the need for operational excellence for the core functions, so managing the root zone file and working with all of the elements there. But I think the other aspect of it is the governance approach. So, ICANN is an example, a very practical example of a multi-stakeholder approach of bottom-up governance.

And I think as we, and this goes back to the core principles discussion earlier today, I think even as technology changes, and it will change, and I think one of the reasons we sort of for 20 years have been saying internet governance is special, is unique, is because that evolution is happening so fast and there's a need to adapt and there's a need to be agile. As that technology evolves, there is still the need for that multi-stakeholder approach. And so, ICANN and its community and this kind of work to bring people into an understanding of how a multi-stakeholder approach works is going to be fundamental.

So even as AI develops and AI governance develops, which is happening right now in lots of, well, in the UN and in lots of regional groups and lots of countries looking at national strategies, people coming from the ICANN community who can bring an understanding of why multi-stakeholder governance can be so effective is really important. And so, I think that's a secondary but perhaps almost as just as important role that ICANN can play.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Chris. There is a question from a virtual Fellow, actually, the Fellow who didn't get his visa but is joining us virtually, Isaac Omilabu. He is asking a question, I would like to know how can we enhance transparency of IANA amidst the increasing the government regulations? I'm not sure if--

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Transparency of IANA?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Yes, transparency of IANA for the government regulations. But probably he needs some clarity also to understand what is IANA and why.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE

So, I think the IANA functions and maintaining the root zone file, maintaining the top level of the number registries, maintaining the protocols and parameters is very transparent. I think perhaps what we're talking about here is less about transparency and more about understandability or comprehension. So, while that information is there, while it's easy to go and see what the root zone file is, what the allocation of internet number resources is, governments, policy makers don't necessarily have the knowledge, the background, the expertise to go and get that information themselves.

So, I think that's where a lot of the work that ICANN does with government engagement is so important. It's where, and I've had numerous discussions today about this actually, ICANN can

support community members to engage with their governments. It doesn't all have to come from ICANN itself, but even when you're talking to your governments or people, policy makers in your countries, you'll have your own positions you're advocating for, absolutely, but if you can also bring in relevant information that ICANN can provide or ICANN can give you on how the model works, what information is available, that will be really useful.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you and I would like to give the floor to finish this session with the call to action to our panellists, with your advice, your call to action to Fellows, to NextGenerers. Maarten?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

Follow up, basically, engage, and yes, this network where you're now part of, or already part of for some time, very valuable, keep in touch with each other, help each other on your journey towards even more maturity than you already displayed today in this meeting.

Second thing, check out the websites, don't wait from meeting to meeting and hoping you'll get travel funding. You can continue to participate and even for me, if I commit sometimes, I don't know whether I'll be able to be there in person or whether my contribution will have to be via Zoom or whatever. Don't let that stop you.

Step three, I think, Leon, what was Leon saying in the beginning, don't draw conclusions immediately. Find your way and fill your

way in. And last but not least, contact any of us if you have any questions or doubts or if we don't answer, the answer may come a bit later, but you risk nothing just to get the help that you may be seeking.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

I usually tell them, ask me questions, and if I don't know the answer, I definitely know the person who knows the answer. So, Leon?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN

So much more political.

LEON SANCHEZ

Thank you. Thank you, Siranush. Yes, I think one of the things that I like to tell fellows and every time I meet with you is that doers achieve more than talkers. So, if you want to see something done, do it yourself and ask the questions. There are no dumb questions. There are dumb people that don't ask questions. Always ask questions and always try to get that knowledge to do the things you want done.

And literally, you are the limit to whatever achievement you want to achieve. Just trust yourself. Find your way in the community. Contribute to it. And that contribution will, in turn, pay the effort. And thank you for your commitment and for your effort of being here. And I certainly hope that you will continue to be in touch. And

as I usually also say, I'm only one click away. Give that click. Reach out. I'll be happy to continue the conversation.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Leon, and thank you for inspiring advices to all our newcomers and the returning fellows. Thank you very much for finding time to be with us. And our appreciation goes to you for all the hard work you do for us. And with that, our meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much. We can stop the recording now.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]