
ICANN82 | CF – GNSO: CPH Membership Work Session
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SUE SCHULER

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BETH BACON

Hello, friends. Welcome. I'm Beth Bacon. I'm the Chair of the Registry Stakeholder Group. This is Owen, Chair of the Registrars. You should know that if you're in this room. We're just going to jump right in. We have quite a few topics to prep for the Board interaction that follows immediately this session, so we want to make sure that we are going over and we have shared positions and points of view to share with the Board, and then also designated topic leads. And as usual, we try and make sure that's not just the

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Ex-Coms sitting up on the bench, that we have folks that are experts from the membership to come up and talk.

So, we can just hop right in. We have the questions up, yeah? On a slide? Nice. So, we'll just jump right in. These are the questions from the Board. Please provide input on meeting structure. The registries provided input back into the GNSO process request on meeting structure, as did, I believe, the registrars. And we just emphasize flexibility and the ability to give the meeting planning team enough flexibility that they could make the most cost-effective choices as principles to go by, and I think that that might be a good approach.

I don't know if the registrars have something more specific, but the floor is open for anyone who has thoughts and feelings. There was a meeting yesterday for the full community to talk about how we meet, and there were a lot of different proposals. So, the floor is yours.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Yeah, this is Owen Smigelski, chair of the Registrar Stakeholder Group. So similar alignment on the feedback we gave, but I guess part of our concern was the fact that ICANN's considering removing one of the in-person meetings, which that was a hard no from the registrars. We found the value of meeting in person. Online meetings are good in a stopgap measure when you can't meet, but they're a lot more productive when in person.

And also, some of the concerns, I don't know necessarily how much we shared in our statement, but we have concerns that the way ICANN is approaching this is going around the multi-stakeholder model. This meeting strategy was put in place by a cross-community working group, and now ICANN org is just unilaterally making some changes. So, we have some concerns about how it's being approached and perhaps what this could mean for other things in the future. So, I see we have some people in the queue. Ashley?

AHSLEY HEINEMAN

Thank you. Ashley from GoDaddy. I'll be the first to admit that I didn't read whatever they published just before the meeting, but I know that when we had our discussions as registrars, it was hard to know what made more sense because you didn't know how much money would actually be saved. Was that information detailed in what they most recently published? Because again, I find it hard to believe that cutting one day would really get them a lot of money in return. So just being able to, in an educated fashion, contribute would help with those numbers. Thanks.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Yeah, I don't think there was anything there, but again, as I mentioned during that session cutting one day the fact that yesterday was my fourth day here, so I'm not sure what ICANN wants to cut, because that could significantly impact. Although somebody did suggest, I think maybe it was Chris, about rearranging the schedule and showing what a rearranged schedule

would look like. But just that we don't know what that could result in ultimately. Jeff?

JEFF NEUMAN

Yeah, thanks. Another topic that came up yesterday was whether to pursue, which I thought we had made the decision years ago to do, like multi-city contracts or multi-meeting contracts with a particular city. I think that had some support. So, I don't know if we care about that, but again, I think the overall point is let's see what other cost-cutting measures we could take rather than just slash the one meeting.

The other thing, this was my issue, I'll throw it out, was just on when choosing locations to make sure that we're choosing locations where people can not have to, let's just say, hide who they are, whether that's from a religious standpoint or from LGBTQ or whatever, that people should not have to choose between going to an ICANN meeting or not going to an ICANN meeting or going to an ICANN meeting and hiding yourself or who you are. Again, that was my issue. If the contracted parties support that, that's great. If not, that's fine, too. I just thought I'd bring it up.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Jeff. Owen Smigelski again. And yeah, I agree, and thank you for that intervention yesterday. Because there have been people who have made the choice of go to ICANN or not go to ICANN just because they don't feel safe there, and we're going to have that again later this year as well, too. So, I think that is a

concern that we need to make sure there. I think ICANN has done a couple of multi-meeting ones. I think Marrakesh was one of those, and Cancun. Thankfully, I hope we never go back to Cancun. I've heard that's fallen off of the radar, perhaps, for some reason, but yeah. Obviously, not two in one year or something, but going to the same place two or three years apart isn't that terrible. Beth?

BETH BACON

So, I think that it might be beneficial to-- Because as Ashley noted, we don't have the actual numbers, and that's something that the registries really highlighted in our return back was, this sounds like it might be a good idea, but please provide us with the actual numbers so we can make an educated choice. So, it might be best if we not nitpick into the actual proposals that have been made, but stay at a principle level and just-- I mean, we could say certainly we really don't support losing a full meeting, but make the request that we understand that the key and not insignificant challenge is to make the structure financially sustainable, but also enough to get our work done.

But also, we need to give the meeting structure enough flexibility that they can take those multiyear contracts, that they can maybe tweak the rotation if it's going to be somewhere and there's nothing affordable in a place that everyone will feel safe and secure. So, I think adding flexibility there. So, we might want to just, as we go through the comments, noodle on thinking about principled approach and then requesting a bit more detail on those proposals that ICANN finds the most viable with regards to

numbers so that we can understand the actual true cost savings.
So, I think Karen's next.

KAREN DAY

Thanks. This is Karen Day for the record. I just want to add on to the point about potentially doing multiyear contracts. That would, and could also, in addition to saving cost, it will add a greater, to predictability that we don't have. Currently, we know where we are through the end of this year. We have no idea next year. It used to be when I came into the community that we had three years out, we knew where we were going and we could plan our lives around that.

And so, to me, if the cost savings of saying we're going to rotate between Paris, Los Angeles and Kuala Lumpur and having that predictability, having those multiyear contracts would save enough that we can help those people that aren't going to necessarily have a meeting in their region anymore, get to those meetings. And in addition to knowing that everybody is safe and free to go to those meetings. So, I would like to add to that of the multiyear contracts, knowing where we're going and working around that.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Karen. Reg, you've got the floor.

REG LEVY

Thanks. And I really appreciate your point earlier, Owen, about-- Sorry, this is Reg Levy from Tucows. I'm trying to get better at that. I appreciate your earlier point, Owen, about the fact that we have been here for two days by the time that opening ceremonies start, or the welcome ceremony. So, where are they removing days and who do they think they're shortening the meeting for? Because since we're here, so are all those guys behind the black curtains, so are all of the equipment that we use. It's here. So, I really don't understand what they think the meeting consists of and what they're shortening.

And the second point that I want to make is I think somebody in the chat said that nobody saw a cost breakdown. So, what are the cost cutting, what is the savings that they think are happening? Thanks.

BETH BACON

I'm going to jump the queue for just a second. So, Natalie did share a link to some of the documents, and I'm trying to dig through them now. They were on a wiki space. I didn't see them along with the other comments. I don't know if they have the numbers in them, but I'll try and dig through those as you guys talk. Greg.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks. Greg DiBiase, Amazon Registrar. Three quick things. So, there are numbers. I don't know if they're satisfactory numbers, but noting that. Second, just a quick note that before these options came out, I was on a "discussion" group of SOAC leaders and I got feedback from both of these groups. I gave that to ICANN. Our

comments weren't incorporated in these options. So just noting we'll be making another public comment. And the rationale was before we change anything, we should allow the community to react, which makes sense.

And then the third thing on Ashley's point, potentially circumventing the process. I agree. And maybe another way to phrase that is there may be some options that are really narrow in scope that ICANN can do unilaterally, but something as big as taking a meeting virtual or—what's the correct way to say that?—online, that requires more policy work than simply ICANN telling us what the public comments said.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Greg. This is Owen Smigelski. And I think part of the concern is sometimes ICANN just ignores public comments. And so, that's a really big. They keep saying, oh, we're going to take your feedback, but are they really? They'll take it, but will they incorporate it? And that's a big concern. They're going to make all this stuff, and we're going to say a bunch of things, and then nothing's going to happen. Sebastien?

SEBASTIEN DUCOS

This is Sebastian Ducos in my own capacity here. But I heard yesterday in the GNSO Council from Anne Aikman-Scalese something that rang to me. On matter of principle, cost cutting is all fine. Reviewing what we're doing is all fine. We're an army of volunteers here that spend a huge amount of time here and from

home working and making this happen and making this work. I'd like that to be recognized, too, before we start cost cutting and sending us back home to work from there.

BETH BACON

Catherine?

CATHERINE PALETTA

Thanks. This is Catherine Paletta from Identity Digital. I think that's a great point, Seb. I think we have the COVID lockdown and the online meetings—Sorry, that was not right there in my head—to show that we were not as efficient and effective during that time.

I also want to echo something Greg said yesterday at the GNSO Council, which is cost cutting important. We need to make sure ICANN financially stable, but we also need to make sure that whatever changes we make help us do the work and ensure that we can do the work and hopefully do it more efficiently than the way we're doing it now. And coming at it from that dual focus of it's not just about saving money, but also about making sure that we're able to improve how we do the work, or at least that should be some benefit to how we do this, not just saving money. Thanks.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Catherine. Sam?

SAMANTHA DEMETRIOU

Thanks, Owen. This is Sam with Verisign and one of the registry GNSO councilors. Following Catherine's reminder in the chat to introduce ourselves. Thanks for that, Catherine. So, I think we've raised a lot of really great points here. I wanted to just support Beth's suggestion from earlier that in this conversation, in particular with the Board, we do keep our discussions to the principles themselves. We are going to have an opportunity to submit public comments, and I think that's where comments on the specific proposals are probably going to be better received. It's going to just be easier to make sure that we're articulating them exactly the way we want to.

On the question of the cost breakdowns, the documents that have been shared so far, I believe, really more focus on the way meeting costs overall have evolved from around 2018 pre-pandemic to now. It looks at different costs that make up the overall price tag of a meeting. However, and this goes to Ashley's point, so far the proposals themselves, like individual things like shortening a meeting by a day or what have you, they don't have specific cost estimate savings assigned to them. And that's something that I think today in our discussion with the Board, we should very clearly request them to have staff put that in the document that goes out for public comment next. That's the only way we're going to be able to effectively respond to the ideas that are on the table.

The last thing I wanted to suggest for our discussion with the Board today is that this might be a good opportunity for us to make a commitment to them, which is we want to keep the number of meetings. We get a lot of value out of having the three in-person

meetings a year. That said, if there is a decision made, for example, to shorten the community forum, which is this meeting right here at the beginning of the year, by one day, we are willing to, at least in this early trial period, we are willing to adjust our schedules accordingly.

We're a group, the CPH, who has a lot of really good infrastructure and we're really good at doing things offline, but we need valuable in-person time to get certain things done. We can shift some of our meetings to our regular biweekly cadence, to our monthly cadence with the full CPH, and make the most of our time and really help to keep a meeting to five days instead of six, and not let things balloon just because we want to add things to the schedule. I think if we make a commitment to the Board and staff that if this is something on the table, we will do our part as the community to make that work, I think that's a positive message for us to convey today. Just a suggestion.

BETH BACON

Thanks, Sam. I'm just going to top it. I agree 100% with Sam. That was well laid out. I'm going to draw a line under the queue because we have three other questions to go through, and it's 9:15. So, Roger and then Marc, and then we'll figure out who's going to speak to this.

ROGER CARNEY

Thanks, Beth. And thanks, Sam, because you said almost everything I was going to say.

SAMANTHA DEMETRIOU

It makes me feel smart.

ROGER CARNEY

Makes me feel good. At the meeting, for those that weren't there, the Board did say, and Sam pointed out, the numbers given so far are historical numbers. And they did say that they would do. So, I think we can go to them and say, we support staff generating numbers for removing a day or whatever it is. And we support it and need it. But they said they would do that. So, I think that's important.

And again, positive thing. It was a good meeting yesterday. So, I think we can start with that with them as well and say, hey, it was a great meeting and a great start. To everyone else's issue about how this started or how it's going, we can address that and just get it going in the right direction. I don't think it's a bad thing that it started with the Board, but it's one of those where it needs to come back in and be done. So, thanks.

MARC ANDERSON

Marc Anderson, Verisign. A lot of what I was going to say has been covered. Catherine, Greg made the point. We have the experience of COVID, and we know that we weren't as productive during COVID. As somebody who was part of EPDPs before, during, and after COVID, the difference between being able to meet in person

and not is pretty stark, in my opinion. We made it work during COVID meeting online, but that was less than ideal.

My experience on the EPDP, the initial EPDP, we made zero progress until we got together with our first face-to-face meeting. The ability to sit across from somebody, see their reactions, have hallway conversations with them, understand what they're thinking, it's just invaluable.

One other thing I just want to note, at the session yesterday, I think it was Owen got to the mic and pointed out that the survey options were flavors of how do we remove one of the meetings, and there wasn't an option for keeping all the meetings. I think, Owen, you made a real good point on that one there. I think what I'm hearing is most of us are gravitating towards keeping three meetings, and I think if that's our position, we need to make sure we're clear on that with the Board. Thank you.

BETH BACON

Thank you, guys. I think that was a good discussion. Just to wrap up, I feel like we're going to take a principled approach whomever we decide to speak to this. All the changes need to ensure flexibility and a sustainable work structure, but also keeping in mind that we are still trying, and one of the key items is to make sure that we are improving our work methods, making them more efficient.

It also ties into a later question that we have, encouraging, again, that we work in an efficient and speedy manner. So, if there are folks that are feeling very strongly about this, would like to speak

to it. If not, one of the ExCom can do it. Feels like an ExCom. Okay. Don't all stand up at once. All right, so one of the ExCom will assign this to registry or registrar, and we will do your bidding, as is our job.

My computer just had an absolute spasm and went black. All right, next question. The next question is, and I'll read this for folks who maybe are online but can't hear it. The Board is seeking views from the community about how we can work better with governments to ensure public policies are developed with greater awareness and understanding of ICANN's policies and our multi-stakeholder model.

For those of you who are perhaps playing along at home, you will have noticed that it is a slight tweak from the previous Board question, which was how can we work more closely to ensure governments are encouraged not to legislate around the multi-stakeholder model. So, it's a little more diplomatic, but that's the core of it. So, I see we already have a hand from Ashley, so have at it.

ASHLEY HEINEMAN

Yeah. I appreciate the wording change, but I still don't want to fall into that trap of somehow. Sorry. Open meeting. That we take this opportunity to be as positive as possible, and I think probably one of the best ways we can address this is strengthening our commitment to ICANN, strengthening our commitment to participating in policy development and good faith and all those really wonderful positive things, and we don't fall into a trap of

criticizing our government colleagues, because I don't think that would be terribly productive. Thanks.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

We've got Volker.

VOLKER GREIMANN

Yes, thank you. I think one of the things that we should probably outline is some of the outreach that we have been doing and making sure that governments and other parts of the community understand what we are already doing, how we are already contributing to those effects. Because if they only see the criticisms and the negative effects or the negative views from some parts of the community and outside of the community, because those people speaking negatively about us simply do not know how much we are already contributing to those abuse mitigation efforts and how much we are voluntarily contributing, what we are already doing behind the scenes, what kind of meetings we are organizing, what kind efforts we are spearheading, how we are internally cooperating to combat abuse.

I think educating the community but also the players outside the community is essential if we want to avoid government impact and government regulation. And I think that is also something that we should showcase to the Board and make sure that the Board also reflects when they talk to outside parties that we are doing much more than we are legally obliged to by contract and that we are,

like I said, spearheading various initiatives inside and outside of ICANN to our very best.

BETH BACON

Michele.

MICHELE NEYLON

Thanks. Good morning. Michele for the record. The way that question is phrased, I think, is one of the key problems that ICANN has when it comes to its interactions with governments. There is an assumption that the governments give a crap about ICANN and its policies. It is not the way to approach it. They need to be looking at more in terms of, as others said, going out and showing the broader community what is being done, etc., etc., etc., but expecting governments or any other third parties to have an innate understanding of ICANN's policies and multi-stakeholder model is absolutely ridiculous. And it is laughable.

I cannot imagine how a government, just kind of, oh, that is brilliant, let us go off and learn how to deal with ICANN, because that makes so much sense. It does not. It really does not. If you look at what happens in the numbers community, there is a cooperation working group where companies and people from within the numbers community engage with people in government, and that seems to work pretty well. And there is engagement being handled by the RIRs with government. But the names people and the ICANN Board seem to think that they are

somehow superior and that the government should somehow dance to their tune, and I think that is so, so flawed.

BETH BACON

Okay. So, I think that the crux of this question is also that we can tell them how we think they could maybe do better or different. From my perspective, I liked Volker's point of let's show them how not only the good things, saying we are doing a lot of good things, but it is, I think we are thinking too narrowly. If you guys remember, or I am sure you are aware, there is two levels to this this year. There is the WSIS+20 review, which is examining the fundamental support at a UN level for the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance upon which we are sitting in. So, gestures broadly.

So, we rely upon that support pretty strongly, especially to get the governments here, and part of having the benefit of the governments here is that we can educate them on these things and we can get folks on board. So, I think less phrasing it as, I understand your frustration, Michele, but I think it is less about ICANN thinking they are superior, but better communicating with governments and being able to go in and say, let us show you what is working because of the work we do. This is why the foundation, the technical things of the Internet work. This is why when you go online, things go. This is why you have a secure interconnected DNS.

Because it is not just DNS Abuse things that we are seeing. We are seeing DNS blocking legislation. We are seeing the DNS being used as an enforcement tool through various local legislations. So, I

think that we are thinking a little too narrowly, and I think we could encourage the Board in this effort, as Ashley was saying, be positive. We can talk to you about this. I also think that we should encourage them to be collaborative with the industry and complimentary because if we are all saying similar things to a broad swath of governments, it is going to start to resonate. And I think that we have seen some success with that.

So, those are my high-level, maybe, again, a principled approach. But I think that, again, encouraging this question is good. I'm glad that we got it. We have Jen, CJ, Greg, and then, again, I'm going to maybe draw a line because this is about 15 minutes on this one.

JENIFFER CHUNG

Thanks, Beth. And you have said almost everything I want to say. Just going to pick up and say a big plus one. But also recognizing there's two levels of trying to engage the government broadly as we're looking at WSIS+20 review, the whole multi-stakeholder thing. But more specifically to registries, registrars.

When legislation come in from different parts, like EU, other parts of the world, that affect our businesses, I don't think enough has been done previously to mitigate the big impacts that have on our businesses, on our day-to-days. And I think that can be more well-articulated either from us showing that we are going above and beyond a baseline here. We're also listening to everybody here in the ICANN community.

Of course, for governments, that might not really resonate because they'd be like, what is this? But we can also leverage those governments who already have the representation here in the GAC, leverage more on the allies who actually know what we're doing, or at least they should know what we're doing, to tell capital, to tell their home governments this is what's happening and don't do that.

The second thing is they also don't really speak our language. I think sometimes we have to meet them halfway to articulate what we do in plain language that resonates and governments can actually understand is also very important. That's a skill I don't have. That's a skill maybe government engagement at ICANN has or other corporations have that. So, two things, saying that we're doing above and beyond all of this, please help us help you as well. And this is what we're doing in your language, so hopefully you also understand what we're doing and don't break the Internet and don't break the way we do our business from day-to-day. Thanks.

BETH BACON

Thanks, Jen. Just to add to you, I think when I say let's show them how our work enables their work, that's what I mean. Explain it to them in a way that means something to them. Do you want to do sustainable development? Do you need the Internet? Do you need it to be interconnected beyond your little bubble of one country? Then you need ICANN and you need the multi-stakeholder model and you need to not fragment the DNS. So, Catherine and then Greg.

CATHERINE PALETTA

Thanks. This is Catherine Paletta from Identity Digital. I think we've talked about a lot and lots of folks have talked about how ICANN should highlight the benefits or the successes of the multi-stakeholder model. That's, I think, been hard in recent years with EPDP taking so long and all of this. And so, I think there's room for ICANN to say here are our successes and here's how we're improving.

And we've heard from the GNSO Council that they're working really hard on Board readiness, on improving the efficiency of the policy development process. And I think these are all things that ICANN should be talking with governments about to say, we're not just saying that, look, the system works and leave it alone. The system works and we're always improving on it. And we're making it more effective and efficient and work within the system to help us improve it. If you have ideas of ways when you're here, and this is probably more for the GAC, to improve these processes, tell us. We want to hear that so we can keep iterating and make this process better, more effective. Thanks.

GREG DIBIASE

Greg DiBiase, Amazon Registrar. So just building on what Catherine said, they need to tout victories better. I think they can be more specific so you don't get lost in this gobbledygook language. And the example I'm thinking about is the transfer policy, right? We're about to vote on that. That's something that actually makes the internet safer, more secure, squarely within ICANN's remit. And it's

such a layup. Like, explain what this is in simple terms, right? This is a technical improvement that ICANN executed in. It came in on time. These type of specific wins are what should be touted. And yeah, so add specificity and actually look at the work product coming out. And maybe that's a way to avoid this more vague language that just gets lost in the ether.

BETH BACON

All right. Thanks, Greg. That was another really good discussion. I'm happy to talk to this one if no one else does. But also, it doesn't mean no one can put their hand up if anyone has a burning passion. I voluntold myself. Okay. Oops. All right. So, I will refine all of that. I think that was all really, really good input. And I appreciate all of your brains. Crystal has her hand up.

CRYSTAL ONDO

Crystal Ondo, Google. And I'm not volunteering for this. But I would suggest asking what Kurtis's vision of this is. I think we all live through Juran being multi-directional in his approach and not very transparent about how he was engaging or how he was instructing staff to engage. So, I'd be interested to hear how Kurtis or how the Board expects Kurtis to pivot from that and what they expect to see out of their organization going forward.

BETH BACON

Yeah, I think that's a good point. We also have our question that we sent into ICANN, which is, please tell us your priorities because

we've had several meetings with you and we've asked your priorities. And you went, cool.

CRYSTAL ONDO

But I mean in terms of engaging with governments here.

BETH BACON

Okay. Next question is, what are the challenges you face in contributing to the budget and ops plans discussions? Anyone? Has anyone read the budget and ops plan besides Catherine and I?

SAMANTHA DEMETRIOU

Catherine raised her hand.

BETH BACON

Catherine's got her hand up.

CATHERINE PALETTA

This is my first year really diving into the budget and ops plan. And I was lucky enough that it was also the five-year strategic plan at the same time. So, it's a lot of content. It wasn't that fun. I think one of the two big things for this round specifically, and I don't know-- I think we can mention this, but I'd like to level this up. This isn't about what you did wrong this year, but what in every year we find.

The Fiscal Year 26 Budget and Ops Plan did not include the registry fees increases, which are effective as of January 1. And as far as I'm

aware, did not even include a projection for what the registry fee increases would be. We know ICANN must have that number. Why didn't they tell us? That seems a little sketchy. I don't know why they wouldn't have shared that with us. And so, that was a big point of frustration that we just we can't know what the actual budget or what the actual income for ICANN is going to be if you're not projecting on actual fees collected.

I think we also have talked about how more granular detail and how ICANN is modeling and arriving at these numbers would be really useful because they're throwing out numbers. And one of the things we can do as the community is say, I don't think your logic there tracks. I can't do that. But I have people in my finance department that might want to look at it and tell me that they maybe have issues with ICANN's models. So, those are my two thoughts.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Catherine. This is Owen. And also, I'm guessing it probably did not include anything about registrar fees that they're proposing as well, too.

CATHERINE PALETTA

No, but the registrar fees, the registry fees started January 1. So, you're absolutely right. I just I think it's more offensive to not include the registry fees, which will have been in place for six months prior to the start of this budget.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Michele, you've got your hand up.

MICHELE NEYLON

Yeah, thanks. I'll admit I haven't actually read it. The question I'd have is simply, have they made any clear commitments on cost reductions, including things like, say, putting out some of their vendors to tender? Because if they're not, what the hell are they doing?

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Good point. Yeah, I don't think that's come up. But yeah, it would be good to push it. Sam, you're next.

SAMANTHA DEMETRIOU

Thanks, Owen. This is Sam again. This is a weird idea for how to approach this question in this discussion coming up in an hour. There's a lot that's in the budget that they put out for comment, but the community's comments aren't going to impact them either way. The amount ICANN pays for its staff, its physical locations, all that, it takes a lot of space in the budget. And ultimately, how we feel about it is somewhat irrelevant.

I wonder if this is an opportunity to drive us back to the thing that we do have a lot of input and control over, which is the question about how we meet. And that is something that the community directly shapes. It is something that we directly benefit from every day. And so, I just wonder if there's a way to connect this

conversation back and be like, these are the things that impact us on an annual basis, these are the things that we feel like we have some control over. That should be more of a place where we have input on this. And that's something that it's easier for us to engage on.

I mean, I think the point about fees is a very good one. And we should absolutely work that in as well. As contracted parties, we fund ICANN. So of course, that's something that we should bring in. But in terms of the other aspects of it, this is something we care about. And when we ask you for detail, that's what we mean. The rest of the budget, how do you want us to engage on something that ultimately we don't have any influence over?

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Sam. Jeff?

JEFF NEUMAN

Yeah, thanks. I'm Jeff Newman, Dot Hip Hop. And I'm not sure how to work this in, so I'm talking this out as my brain is moving. ICANN, during the welcome ceremony, actually said that the revenues or the fees that have come in for the first six months of the fiscal year were higher than what they budgeted. And they let it slip or said that if things continue as they predicted, they'll be at an excess this year. So, we're spending lots of time talking about cost cutting, which is always a good thing to have more efficiency. But at some point, you have to go, okay, look, you're having an excess now and

may likely have an excess for the year. We should have to adjust some of the thinking.

And also, of course, we want to know whether they're intending on raising fees for us every year. We still never got a response. We asked them the question last time like, okay, we understand that you did this increase, but what we don't have an understanding of and we don't get it in this plan is whether this is step one of multi-years or what is the long-term strategy on this, the long-term plan, because there must be one.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Jeff. Michele?

MICHELE NEYLON

Yeah, thanks. I think the thing about the how we meet is something that is worth looking at again and again. But the way that it's being pushed as if that is the only saving area that can be looked at, to me, seems rather odd. Because of the total ICANN budget, while they do spend a ridiculous amount of money on meetings, it's not like 50% or 60% of the total budget. It's much, much, much less. I would say that, yes, they don't really seem to link up the fact that we are the source of revenue with how they actually spend that revenue.

So, for those of us who've been here, coming here for a while, I remember the first ICANN meeting I attended, there were probably about 100 staff, maybe less, and the internet worked just fine. Yet now they're at 400 and growing. And the question I have to ask is,

why? The rest of us have had to look long and hard at our expenses. Some of us can't attend every single meeting because our employers, no matter how big they are, simply won't sign off on us. So, I don't think it's unreasonable to push a little bit harder on their overall expenditure and how they're spending things.

And things like the vendors, like why on earth? It may sound like a broken record, but it just seems bizarre to me that they use the same external legal supplier for at least 20 years. Surely, they could negotiate better rates if they put it out. I know that we put stuff out, and most of you put stuff out to tender every couple of years. I don't understand why ICANN is afraid to do so. This is kind of oh, they know it, therefore we can't possibly move. Yet I doubt that those companies haven't been putting up their hourly rates.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Michele. Catherine?

CATHERINE PALETTA

Thanks. I wanted to address Jeff's point, because I think he made a really good one. Sorry, this is Catherine Paletta from Identity Digital. But first I want to start by leveling up our conversation and saying, I don't think we should be getting into this budget thing, that budget thing, what are you doing spending here and there. This is a question about what are the challenges in contributing to the discussions, and I think those challenges are things like we need more detail.

I'm not sure the mentioning the registry fees not being included in the budget is responsive to this question. It's frustrating. I don't like it. But I want to make sure that we're not going up there to just nitpick on where they're spending money, because that's not the point of the question. And I recognize that I brought up the registry fees thing, so we can set that down. So, tell me if you guys aren't on Board with that, but I think that will help us address the question and can make some of these points, but we don't need to be pushing ICANN to cut this or that.

But I think to Jeff's point, I think a lot of what he was saying goes to we need to understand how ICANN's modeling this. We see ICANN has this great reserve fund. It's wonderful. If they're going to see a temporary dip in the industry that's going to raise or lower their income because of fees, fewer domain names being registered, domains are not being renewed, if that's temporary, that's a great option for a reserve fund. If that's going to be a permanent shift in the industry where registrations are just lower, that's where you might need to raise fees more permanently, right?

And we don't know what their expectations were. We don't know what they were modeling. And so, it's not about the fact that they raised fees and whether we agree with that or not. It's about understanding your modeling so that we can understand and maybe question some of that and say, I don't think you're modeling correctly, or based on your model, you're not using the right tool to increase revenue or fill this gap. Thanks.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thank you, Catherine. Marc?

MARC ANDERSON

Marc Anderson, Verisign. I raised my hand to make a similar point to Catherine. I've been looking at this question what are the challenges you face in contributing to the budget, and I've been thinking literally what are the challenges I face in contributing to the budget. And I'm surprised nobody has mentioned this. Frankly, the challenge I face is reading the documents are confusing. There's multiple documents. I'm never sure quite how the different documents interact. They overlap in places.

And so, the biggest challenge I face in contributing to the budget is the information we're asked to contribute on is confusing to me. I'm never quite clear exactly how the money is being spent on. And maybe to run with Sam's point a little bit, of the items in the budget which are discretionary that providing feedback or comments on can actually make a difference. And so, I think maybe that's something to run with a little bit too, but really looking at this question literally the biggest challenge I face is just the information we're asked to contribute on is long. It's complicated and confusing.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Marc. Catherine, is that a new hand?

CATHERINE PALETTA

Yes, I'm sorry. I have been not corrected because I'm still technically right, but at the end of October 2024, separately from the budget, ICANN did post something, and I'll drop the link, about the planned fee increases and how much revenue they expected to get from that. It apparently was a timing issue that it could not get into the budget and ops plan and all of that, but it was published, so bad me, and sorry.

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Yeah, thanks for the correction. As Marc's pointing out, it's tough to see where things are and connect everything together. Sam?

SAMANTHA DEMETRIOU

Yeah, thanks. This is Sam again. So, yeah, so I think, Catherine, that's actually a good illustration of it. It's not wrong, right? But the high-level point here is that the challenge is the opacity of the information, the need to consult different documents to really understand what the facts are in this case. I actually think bringing up the lack of inclusion of the registry fee and registrar fee increase is an important illustration of that point. You're asking people to comment on something without providing them the full picture. That's opaque information, and therefore, it is difficult to meaningfully contribute to it and meaningfully even engage with it.

So, I think that's the high-level point. And when I say connect it back to the how we meet thing, that it ties into the request that we're going to make for that, which is when you're going to present options, they should have a specific estimated dollar amount that

goes with it, because that's the only way you can meaningfully respond to it.

BETH BACON

The end of the queue. Does anyone have any feelings, Catherine, and would want to, Catherine, present on this? Catherine? Or anyone else? I only pointed at her because we made her do the budget comments.

CATHERINE PALETTA

New found to this. Yes, I can. But then we do have all three of these answered by ExCom.

BETH BACON

I would be very nice if anyone else from the lands. Anybody? Anybody? Perhaps on how we meet? No, I'm just looking at literally anyone who has made nice comments over here. So not pointing at Sam if she doesn't want to. Give her a break. It's her first meeting off. Tom, I'm for you to put your hand up.

THOMAS RICKERT

Yeah, I just want to say that I just quickly went through from 2014 budget to the 2024 budget. And according to what ICANN has provided, that it's certainly been pretty stable around \$16 million to \$18 million for all the meetings. I don't understand what they're saying, that the meeting cost has increased, that it's unsustainable. And the highest meeting cost was actually back in 2014. So, I don't understand their point about that costs are unsustainable and that

they want to cut the meetings to cut costs. Just to note that. Thank you.

BETH BACON

Thanks. All right. Well, we just want to make sure that everybody had the opportunity, that it's clear that we don't want this to be ExCom. So, if you decide you have a burning passion to speak to the Board, let us know. But as of now, for the first three questions, we have someone from ExCom on a TBD, myself, and then Catherine on the budget.

That's great. Owen will be doing that, or Sarah, or a registrar. So, we have one more question.

SUE SCHULER

Jeff has his hand up.

BETH BACON

Jeff has his hand up.

JEFF NEUMAN

Yeah, and there's nothing wrong. We don't want it to get out of hand, but there's nothing wrong with ExCom maybe introducing it. But we should know, we should have a plan. But I can bring up a comment on how we meet, although I'm part of ExCom, so it doesn't really help. But it doesn't just need to be one person.

But that said, we want to make sure that what's said to the Board has been discussed here first. So, someone else can go in the how

we meet, and then I might add on the one point that I brought up. So, we need to just balance it, right? We don't want surprises, but there's nothing stopping anyone that's already made a comment that people were shaking their heads going, okay, from adding on afterwards.

BETH BACON

Sure. That's our usual practice. And this is just for the people to tee it up so that there's a nice foundation, and then it'll be a discussion as is per usual at the dais. So, yeah. Thanks for clarifying. We have one final question, and that is what we proposed to the Board. Do we have that on a slide also, Zoe? Yeah, that's what they added that one. I'm going to do that after ours. Okay. because that's how the slides were. Sorry, side chat.

Okay. So, we did propose this. Again, it gets to the desire to understand what Kurtis's priorities are. We will definitely ask with regards to government specifically what his vision is, the government engagement question. But for this, it was during our ICANN81 session prior to Kurtis's start as CEO. The CPH outlined our priorities, and we would like to follow up on that discussion with benefit of the CEO's input and perspectives. So, we are happy to offer our priorities, but then hear what his perspectives are. Does anyone have any thoughts or feelings?

We have notes from our previous engagement, so we can just do a quick highlight run-through of what we had highlighted as our priorities in our Istanbul meeting. And then, really, this is meant

just to be a question lobbed at Kurtis. Does that sound good to everybody?

Okay. And the final thing is that the Board staff, prep staff, did flag for us that they want to possibly discuss reviews-related work. And I'll share as we come into the Pilot Holistic Review work and then the upcoming ATRT4, they are trying to understand the community views for scoping ATRT4, and then, also, how those reviews look going forward following a Pilot Holistic Review process.

I know that so Chris Disspain has been very active on the Pilot Holistic Review for the CPH, so I did ask him to be on tap if no one else has a burning desire. And I will note that Sophie has also been incredibly helpful. It's been a dynamic duo of them powering through the Pilot Holistic Review stuff. I see we have a queue. Seb, and then Ashley.

SEBASTIEN DUCOS

Sebastian Ducos for the record. So, two things. First of all, I do have a burning passion for governments, but also a raging case of jet lag. So, I don't know if I'll be the most efficient speaker, but I'm half raising a hand here. Second, about the question to Kurtis, I've heard him already several times, not this week, but before, skirting around the fact that he's just very new and he doesn't have yet all these things, which he's going to give us as the default answer. So, if there are points that we really want to dig into, we just need to have those after questions.

BETH BACON

Thanks, Seb. If you would like to join us on the dais and chime in and have someone else, have Chris maybe tee it up. Ashley?

ASHLEY HEINEMAN

Thank you. Ashley, GoDaddy. I just want to make sure that we double down on our support for the ethics policy, because I think there is still going back to the old issues from those who do not want to divulge who they represent. But also, on the matter of reviews, and I don't want to take up too much time here, because I don't think we've really had a good, hard conversation about reviews. And it came up yesterday during the-- well, it did come up yesterday during the Board meeting with the GSO.

I am very intimate, based on my previous employer, of how important reviews are. But I also think that the situation with the reviews has gotten out of hand, in terms of they're confusing, they're back to back. I think the whole value and purpose of the reviews has now been lost, and that there needs to be some kind of-- What's the word I'm looking for? I'm losing my articulation of fancy words. But we need to look and get back to the basis of what these reviews are meant to be. And if that means getting rid of some or changing the timing, I think that would be helpful, because we're-- If we're losing, if the purpose of them is being lost, then what's the point?

So, I understood what Thomas Rickert was saying, and that we have to be careful. But at the same time, if there's no value, then we've lost the intent anyway. So, I just wanted to lay that down. Maybe that's a subject of a broader conversation later. But I think

we need to help ICANN do a better job, but not put ourselves in a weird situation where it looks like we're backtracking on accountability. So, thank you.

BETH BACON

Yeah, thanks, Ashley. I think those are good points. And I think there is certainly a way to say, we absolutely. I mean, we don't-- The reports that are coming out, and not only are they overlapping, but then they're still being implemented when the next one starts. And as we talk about being more efficient in all of our processes, narrowing the scope of PDPs, making them targeted, I don't think that it's inappropriate for us to say, you could also scope down those reviews to make them more targeted and make them make the, again, also paralleling to PDPs. The outcomes need to be actionable and within scope. There was, I think, the SSR2, it might have been.

There were just a bunch of recommendations that were wildly out of scope and not even in the mission of ICANN. So, it was really challenging, and it took a lot of community time to then evaluate and rebut and clarify and all these things. So, I think that it's not an inappropriate point to make that we could review the scope and the pacing. And I think, let's keep in mind also that the Pilot Holistic Review is happening, and that is meant to maybe, I'm going to look at something, replace, but not really replace some of the review processes. So, we are trying to go towards efficiency. But I think they need to hear those things, and it will help them, arm them to

make those difficult choices if we can give them some support.
Jeff.

JEFF NEUMAN

Yeah, thanks. Jeff Neuman. And I agree with all of that. I think the problem right now for the Board is that they're in a weird position because the bylaws require them to do it. And so, they're going to do it. They have to do it. The question is, what can we suggest as a community to give the Board what they need from an organizational standpoint to not have to do it?

So, I totally agree. We need to go back and say, well, are these reviews really serving its intended purpose and blah, blah, blah. But is there something we can do in the short term to help them so that they're not constantly worried about this? And is that a bylaw amendment that says I don't know what, but that gives the Board the right to pause the reviews or to delay the reviews. Because there's nothing in the bylaws that actually allows the Board to do that. And of course, they're very conservative. And they're worried that someone's going to come after them because they're violating the bylaws.

So, I totally agree with everything everybody has said. But I think we just need to give some thought of how we as a community can give the Board the cover they need so that they're not brought into some accountability measure and spent a lot of money to find that what we already know, that they're in violation of the bylaws. So,

it's a long way of saying we need to think about it a little bit more, but we should also offer helpful things to help us help the Board.

BETH BACON

All right. Guys, we have one minute left. So quickly to Sophie. And then please put your hand up if you are interested. We do have Chris Disspain on tap to tee this up. But Seb, if you want to be on the dais, we've established that. So, we'll have that going. But Sophie, please bring us home with flair.

SOPHIE HEY

I'll do my very best. No, I do want to wrap up in the spirit of the constructive ideas of how to do it. Just to clarify what Jeff says, the bylaws are actually silent on whether they can defer reviews or not. They don't say that they can. They don't say that they can't. So realistically, if we're looking at that clarification, it's, hey, maybe you want to put that clarification into a bylaw amendment to make sure that you're comfortable that you can defer it.

And again, looking back at the rationales they had on, I won't go into detail, conscious everyone wants coffee, on the ATRT3 scorecard, the logic for actually pausing and moving things, it's based on the fact that we don't want this to be a mess. That's part of the rationale. And so, I think we're happy to help. Hey, by the way, if you want to add a clarification into the bylaws to say that you're allowed to pause reviews based on prioritization or the rest of it, that seems sensible to me.

BETH BACON

Thank you, Sophie. And I like that that suggestion is very specific to what that bylaws should say, because I think when we say open the bylaws, everybody goes, ooh. So, I think a very specific suggestion is good. Does anybody have any other business we got to wrap this up? Because we are a minute over, and someone's going to throw something at me. Okay. See you at the Board. Bye.

SUE SCHULER

We can end the recording.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]