
ICANN84 | AGM – Africa Space
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YAOVI ATOHOUN

Hello everyone and welcome to the Africa Space Session. My name is Yaovi Atohoun and I will do the remote participation for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, ICANN Space Standard of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

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So, with that, I want to invite Pierre Dandjinou, who is the Vice President for Civil Engagement in Africa, to make a few remarks.

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Pierre Dandjinou, unfortunately, will not join us on-site. And Pierre, if you are ready, I know you are in an agenda now. If you can, I can give you the floor. If not, we'll come back to you, Pierre. So, Pierre, let us know if you can say some few words now. Pierre, over to you.

Thank you very much. I think Pierre will join us very soon and, on his behalf, I would like to thank you all for being in this session and also for participants online. We are very delighted that, again, you are having interest for this session we call Africa Space. And also in this session, we want to also thank Sally Costerton and Catherine Adeya, who all the time, always there with us in the engagement journey in Africa. And this session will be more about reporting.

We'll be reporting about the past five-year plan for the region. And then after Pierre presents the report, we'll give the opportunity to all of you on-site or remotely to make your comment, input, and to ask questions. So, with that, I would like to hand over to our Board member, Catherine Adeya, for her remarks. Catherine, over to you.

CATHERINE ADEYA

Thank you. Really, mine is going to be very brief. And mostly, it's first of all to thank you all for attending this Africa Space. I mean, there are a number of competing engagements, and to still be able to have you in this room is excellent. Even I'm supposed to be somewhere else, but Africa Space always comes first. But I guess the great emphasis of this session is, of course, going to be the

presentation of the five-year implementation plan based off from the Strategic Plan that the Board also oversighted.

And it's being implemented regionally. So, of course, the focus for this session is to hear what's being done in Africa. And as a Board member, and on behalf of the Board, we hear a lot at a higher level. So, coming here is a great opportunity to hear it at granular level, what's actually happening in Africa and what's the region doing. I had the opportunity yesterday to go and attend the LAC Space to hear what's happening in LAC.

And LAC was also comparing some of the things being done in Africa, and they're doing them as well. So, it's really good that I attended the LAC Space, then came here. So, it's really just to see how we are localizing this strategy and how we are working through partnership and through the multi-stakeholder model. So, please feel free on this. This is your space on this process, and I'm looking forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much, Catherine. We want now to give the floor to Sally Costerton for her opening remarks. Sally, over to you.

SALLY COSTERTON

Thank you, Yaovi, and good morning, everybody. It's always a pleasure to be here. And exactly as Catherine says, this is always a priority on my calendar. And we had a meeting. Actually, Catherine and I had a meeting yesterday, I think it was. Was it the day before?

Oh, goodness, I've gotten to that stage where I don't know what day it is. It's Wednesday at an ICANN meeting. I definitely know that.

With the AFRICAN group and the AFRALO group. And Catherine and I had the opportunity there to also listen to the readout of the statement. Now, I think some of you will have been in that meeting. And I want to applaud you as a regional group. I think it's very exciting. I think the progress that you're making as a community, frankly, I think you're setting an example.

And I think it's happened for a while in the Africa region. That kind of approach of coming together and agreeing what you believe and what you want and being clear about what the ask is. We had a really good detailed discussion to Catherine's point about being granular about how to set up, if you will, a kind of a think tank approach. How do we do that with you? How do we support you? How does the rest of the community come around that?

That's where my team can really support. Because once we know where you are and what you need, we can work out how does that fit with the resources we have? And how can we, between us, maximize the resources that we have together to support ICANN's delivery of its mission? And frankly, its ability to continue to deliver its mission here in Africa and the stakeholders in Africa, particularly those who are not familiar with our world, who are not contracted parties or members of the At-Large or members of the NCSG or members of the RALOs.

They don't know who we are necessarily, but they have the power to affect our ability to deliver our mission into the future. And there are more of them than ever before. And one of the initiatives, of course, that you're going to hear about today, which is very much designed to help ICANN embrace that group, is the Coalition for Digital Africa.

Again, honestly, I want you to know this is groundbreaking what we've done here in Africa. It's the first time we've created something so substantial that embraces partners well beyond our traditional DNS ecosystem, but includes our partners. And it has strengthened our profile and influence in Africa enormously. And I know you will be pleased to hear that I've just been putting together with Kurtis the budget submissions for the FY, can you believe this, the FY27 budget, which will come to you for public comment around about Christmas time, I think.

And Kurtis is hugely supportive of the all continuing to focus on the financial support that ICANN gives. And I wanted really just to make one other comment to, so that hopefully this is helpful for this discussion, because I don't want to present the same results Pierre is going to present, we don't have enough time. But here's what we're doing in the organization that I wanted to update you on.

When we were in the AFRALO discussion, we talked about the community's desire to shift and to delivering outcomes. And Catherine's talked about the Strategic Plan, and the way in which your regional engagement plan in Africa, which we're going to see

in a moment, drops down from that Strategic Plan. And it absolutely outlines, okay, how is this region, and the engagement resources in this region going to deliver the outcomes, not all of them, which outcomes are we going to deliver against and Strategic Plan?

And who needs to do what and when in order for that to happen? It's the first thing, that's a shift. Honestly, we've tended to manage engagement in the last 12 years since I've been at ICANN in a much more activity-based way, here is a thing, here is another thing, we go to this, and then we go to that. And we kind of meet people and we build trust. And people in the community and in the staff will often say, it's the right thing to do.

I personally struggle with that expression, the right thing to do. Because it depends who you are. I mean, who knows? How do we know if we all think the right thing is the same thing? But we do all know, and you heard Tripti talk about this in the opening ceremony, and Catherine just referred to it, we know that we have a five-year Strategic Plan, which is the product of a truly multi stakeholder bottom-up process. And it has all of our fingerprints on it.

We have given it legitimacy and we have given it life. And what I'm doing with the engagement function, and also with my colleagues inside ICANN is trying to make sure all the work we do and all the resources we have are behind that plan. So, that all the other regions will do what you have done very well, which is to cascade

that engagement work in the region out of that plan so that there are alignment and consistency.

And that will enable us to make the most of the resources that we have to protect ICANN's ability to do that. Because Kurtis, when he first came in as CEO, said something fascinating to me and to our executive team. He said, we said to him, how do we know we're delivering the mission? This is a big existential question. We discussed it in lots of community groups. We have done all the time I've been at ICANN. And he said, we show the world we are delivering the mission by delivering our Strategic Plan and delivering on the promises and commitments that it contains.

To me, that is a big thing. I just wanted to take this opportunity in this platform to share that with you, so that you can see how we're managing our internal resources, including those in Africa, but globally, coordinating globally, to say what are the most important things we should be doing with engagement to make sure that we're doing that.

And that might mean that we adjust and we say this thing that we've been doing for a long time, which takes up time and money, doesn't actually serve those purposes anymore. But we will do that in coordination with you and discussion with you. And as we shift to those that sort of prioritize the delivery of the outcomes in the plan, we'll stay very closely aligned to the regional plan. So, this is probably a good moment to hand back to you, Yaovi, because I feel like we need to show them the plan.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much, Sally. Thank you for being with us all the time. I will hand over to Pierre Dandjinou. But before that, I want to mention that we do have interpretation only on the French channel for those who are following interpretation.

So, Pierre, we want to give you the floor first to make some remarks, and then we'll have you take us through that report we want to share with the audience. So, Pierre, over to you.

Yes, Pierre, you can go ahead for your remarks, and then we move to the presentation, Pierre.

PIERRE DANDJINOU

Oh, thank you. Thank you very much, Yaovi. I hope you can hear me.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

If you can try to speak a bit louder, Pierre. Thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU

I hope you can hear me. And my apologies, I could not join you. That's because I had a last-minute sort of complaint here, and also having some issue with connectivity. But I just want to say that I'm quite happy to have you all, and then thanking you for your time. As I've already said, now is the time of the year that we actually introduce what we've been doing, and this time is going to be for

our last five years of Africa Strategy, we do have a few sorts of results and impact that we want to show you.

At the same time, this is the year we also want to, I mean, that we like to hear from you, because after all, we are here to support you. So, feel free to have any questions, any comments. We are here to support. So, with that, I would like to also express my gratitude to many of you that have been assisting us, especially for writing that strategy.

The five-year strategy, the report will be presented, but then we also are going to introduce you to the one we just developed, which covers the next five years, and we also have an operation plan for FY26.

So yeah, thanks so much for coming. Sorry, I could not join, but we are always around, the other staff, you know, around, they come, they come and support. I'll be also online to provide any sort of responses, feedback you like. So, thank you again, Yaovi, back to you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Yeah, thank you. Before Pierre continues the presentation, I want to mention also that we have other staff in the room, and I am sure you already talked to some of them. We have the VP for Technical Engagement at ICANN, Adiel Akplogan, who is on my left. Then, we are glad that Adiel is with us, and then, definitely, you may have some questions, and then Adiel will help us.

We have also, like from Africa, we have our colleague Bob Ochieng, who contributed to that work before moving to the national team. So, Bob contributed a lot to that work during the past five years we have. And then, also, so, we will have your input, your comment. Then, I want, with that, to go back to see if Pierre could also take us through the presentation now, and then, Pierre, you can continue. But please, we want you to maybe raise a bit your voice for the audio.

So, Pierre, over to you. We can start with, the agenda is on the screen, and to help Pierre, I want to mention that what Pierre is going to cover, we have five items to cover. Briefly, I'm saying in 20 minutes, we have five items.

So, the first one is we are going to maybe give a background. So, why talking about a regional plan today? And then, many people are reading about Africa Strategy. We started with something like that. So, first, the background about that. And then, they reported the five years we are talking about, reporting about.

So, the objective has been considered. So, that is the second point we're going to talk about. And what has been achieved? Mainly, we'll talk about trainings, global engagement, because engagement is key for the region. This is something we noted when we are working on this regional plan. So, engagement is still key. And then, now, what is good is that we have what we call Technical Engagement.

And then, we have also, in addition, I didn't mention Yazid yet, but Yazid is the one helping us a lot in the region. Yazid is on my left here. I'm sure many people have seen Yazid. So, Technical Engagement is also key in what we are doing. And as also Sally raised that before, we are going to share the coalition for digital Africa.

So, what has been done so far in the past five years with the coalition for digital Africa? And recently, we had the contribution from the community to develop a new plan. We started in July this year for the next five years, ending in June 2030. So we'll briefly also present that. And then, what are we doing or what have we started doing in this current fiscal year, what we call the fiscal year 2026, which started on the first of July and ended on 30th of June next year.

So globally, this is what we want to share with you this morning. And then, we'll have the contribution, your question and contribution. So, with that, I want to hand over to Pierre Dandjinou for the next part of the presentation. So, Pierre, over to you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU

Hello.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Yes, Pierre, you can continue, Pierre.

PIERRE DANDJINO

Okay. Thank you very much, Yaovi, and thank you for providing those additional details. It's quite important. We do have many people that have been supporting us in our Africa Strategy. Great that you mentioned our colleagues from Technical Engagement. And good morning to all of you. Good morning. And I'm so happy that you guys are around to present some of the case studies that we do have in Africa.

Talking about the Africa Strategy, the five-year strategy, it's important that one has also cognizance of what might be the story around those things, especially the Africa Strategy. In fact, the initial strategy was drafted in 2012 by the Africa Strategy working group that we put in place. And also, the good thing here is that it's about what exactly the Africans were looking for in terms of, you know, what ICANN should be investing on in Africa.

And basically, it came with kind of two sort of requests, which is, okay, the participation, you know, make sure that the African participation as much as possible to ICANN work. While at the same time, they wanted to, you know, ICANN to have a footprint. And the second thing they also mentioned was Capacity Development. So, that one is quite key. So, over the last five years, that's exactly some of the things that we make sure that Africans, you know, participate in the work. And so, ICANN is the worst.

And you can see it, you know, you guys are now having your fellowship. But at the same time, we are happy to say that many, many institutions, you know, companies also are sending their staff

here to ICANN, which means that they have understood why, I mean, the stake that are there and why they should be contributing and participating.

So, that's quite important for us. But that strategy has also got a few, I mean, different additions, you know, meaning we try to revise the plan in 2015, and then to align it with ICANN strategy itself. So, yeah, one of the things we also do is make sure that we align the strategies to the one of the corporates of ICANN itself. And next slide, please, Yaovi.

So now, we are, I would say the one we are reporting on, of course, you know, covers 2021 to 2025. We are going to release this report, certainly in Accra. I'm already inviting you to our events in Accra early December. So, we'll be releasing that one.

Now, the second review we have was in 2016 to 2020. That was in Cotonou, Benin. Next slide, please, Elvie. So, one of the things that we need to bear in mind is that that 2020, first 2025, you know, strategy plan was developed, again, by the Working Group of 25 members. We want to insist on that and also thank you all for your contribution for that.

We also agree on that strategy on five strategic objectives that are actually listed also in ICANN's strategy plan for fiscal year 2021 and 2025. And they are, all of them, quite relevant to Africa. Now, we agree on kind of the timelines because we have to work, you know, year by year.

So, we managed to have activity that we could cover in specific, you know, years. So, the final Africa regional plan, like I said, to be shared at the end of June. Now, maybe to thank you for the, like I said, the alignment, with ICANN's FY20, first FY25 strategy plan. Here are the, I mean, the mapping of our regional priorities to, of course, first pillar of the objective is strengthening, you know, DNA security and stability.

It's a key for us. It's about the DNA, you know, most of the things we are doing, you know, 60 or 65%, it's about, you know, securing the DNA stability in Africa. We also want to be improving the effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder model, which is key also to establish, in Africa. Of course, evolving the unique identifier system is also one of our goals.

And, of course, the addressing the geopolitical challenges that we will be facing in terms of internet development, internet digital transformation in Africa. And finally, it's about the finances, ensuring financial sustainability. Well, now, let's talk about the focus area that we have identified.

So we identified the following strategic objectives, and then we have the original goals, the targeted outcomes, the action steps, and then strategic risks for this plan. So, now to, now come directly in the activities that we conducted, because that's what's most important and we don't have much time for that.

Certainly, DNA security and stability in Africa. So, we did organize a few webinars, for instance, on DNA Abuse. We do have

engagement with our technical communities. We did have no technical workshop, in different places. And we also have the L-Root, instance deployment in Africa. Two countries now have the clusters, L-Root clusters, and we are going to have more and more countries with a standalone sort of L-Root instance deployment.

And then, quite importantly, the DNA security deployment as well. The latest now we have to account for is the one in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Burundi, that was kind of success. And we would like to also thank our Technical Engagement for having also the consulting that we did have, that took us to these interesting results.

We are also trying to improve the effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder model in countries. We're contributing to the Internet Governance Forum, be they intercontinental, be they regional, or even country level, we participate, we sponsor those things. We also sponsor the School of the Internet during the five years that we've been doing this. We also have a kind of what I call an academic engagement with MOU, with the Association of African Universities, with ATU regional office in Kenya. And we are now working also with UNECA to also have an MOU.

So, these are quite important tools that we need to actually continue the working. So, addressing geopolitical challenges goes through what we've been doing in terms of supporting Africa to be open to different issues that have been raised, especially within instances such as the Internet Governance Forum. You guys have

been having different thematics and we participate in them and thank you for the good work.

In terms of financial sustainability, well, of course, we don't have much figure to be showing here, but suffice to understand that we do have strategic resource allocation from ICANN that really help us deliver what we can deliver.

Yeah, we do have a few figures, a few statistics in terms of our engagement. You could see the figures starting from FY 2021 to 2025. You could see the figures in terms of how, in terms of engagement, in terms of, work having specific activities in different places or in your countries. So, the figures are there. You can come back on details if you want to have them.

Now, we do have what I call the audience in our engagement, meaning, who are the ones that we really kind of supported? Who are the ones that we really work with?

First, you see the academia, the business, government and technical community. We have a statistic on them. Now, what were the topic? What exactly were we dealing with in terms of our Capacity Development workshops? Of course, that covers different things. DNS basic, DNS industry, DNS security, Geopolitics. ICANN Related Topics. ICANN Technical Initiative, IDNs/UA/EAI.

Next one, we are dealing with the real news. We spent the last, I would say one or two years in the internet. But we need to be able to have that ground and any model out of the system. We can do

something with the word and make sure that they understand.
What supports are there?

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Sorry, Pierre, maybe if you can try to see how the audio can be better. Thank you so much. We have some issues, thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU

Oh, I'm sorry. Wait a second, let me try. Is that better now? Can you hear me?

YAOVI ATOHOUN

A little better.

PIERRE DANDJINOU

A little better, yeah. Yeah, I was having issue with my connectivity. Okay, that means I can continue before we are almost, done. But then you can, if you can't hear me, then I'll leave it to you. But what I would like to mention here is the Africa DNS, forum, which has become a kind of-

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Oh, okay, Pierre, maybe I can help you when we improve your audio. Thank you so much. We apologize for the audio issue. So, what I want to add to what Pierre was saying is that during the path here, DNS forum is also something key for us. But during the past 50 years, we had one virtually because of the COVID at that time.

And again, we have the last one. The last one we had of hybrid format was the one in Kenya in 2022. So, we'll talk more about the DNS forum. Now, we want to also briefly touch on the Coalition for Digital Africa, which came during the past five years. So, we want also to share some achievement in that project. And it is focusing on three area mainly. The first one is DNS infrastructure in Africa. That is the first focus area.

We also have a meaningful collectivity as a focus area. And then also Capacity Development. So, what have been done so far in Coalition for Digital Africa with the partners are in these three areas. And globally, we were able to touch on 34 countries as a coalition's activity during the past period we are reporting on. And when we talk about people in general, we can mention 81% and then on the continent, we can mention 62.

So far, we have some project on this Coalition for Digital Africa, which are contributing to the plan, the five-year plan. So, what we have, we can mention is the, ICANN manage a reservoir. We are calling now the L-ROOTS. So, now L-ROOTS is what we were calling sometime IMRS. So, that is the L-ROOTS. And then to that project, we had two clusters deployed in Africa. So, that was during the period we are reporting on.

Again, we had also Capacity Development for a country code top level domain organization entity, I want to say. So, we are able to work with some ccTLDs institutions in addition to, and some of them are from Lusophone speaking country. And these activities

started recently with this country. We also conducted DNS Roadshow, which was something we were doing when we started engagement on the continent.

You will see that some countries in Africa, they went to the signature or sign in their zone during the previous phase of the DNSSEC Roadshow. Though, so this is something we continued during the first year. And especially we had three countries who have completed the deployment and they worked hardly. And then through this project, we have partners working with them. And then they were able, especially in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and then in Burundi. And so, if you are using the ccTLD of this country, you see that now you can also move because the zone is signed.

So, other leaders also can move into the signature. Universal Acceptance is also one hot topic. And then in this coalition, we have a partner with the Association of African Universities. We have been doing awareness for many, many years. And then AAU in this partnership wanted really to make changes with their members.

So, it is an association with more than 400 members. And then through this project, they were able to have website of the members of the AAU. So, we have 137 members website, which are now ready. And then I note we have many sessions about. So, we have our colleagues from the UA department around. So, the meaning is that on this website, people should no more issue when they want to enter email address in not Latin character.

So, some of these universities now they are compliant when we talk about website. And then also the email system sending or receiving email from non-Latin email addresses. So, it is possible in 302 institutions in this association. And currently, what we are focusing on with AAU currently is the curricular aspect. And then we have started working with some universities, but we are open to more universities on that project.

What they want to do is that they will have a change in the curricular. It's a long process. The process is not the same in some countries. So, AAU is in partnership with also that we can really have this as a reality in curricular in some universities.

Exchange point also, we have a partner ISOC. For example, we are working on internet access point on the continent. And again, government and regulators, lawmakers, they were very involved through the coalition for Digital Africa. And then we have trained more than 40 parliamentarians and then got people and also government and ccTLDs.

Several level agreements also, was a project part of this coalition for Digital Africa. And the last one was a study we completed to better understand the domain name industry in Africa. And then this study was completed during the five years.

I mentioned that Technical Engagement is also key. It's also key because we have staff, educated staff to really talk to the technical

community. So, through the five years, we have a team and then we have conducted about 200 engagement activities in the region.

Generally, we had a general outreach and hands-on Capacity Building technical workshop at the national and the regional level through webinars. And also, sometimes we have our staff in the ground with hands-on activities. So, that was really also appreciated by the participant. And we have the government, we have government people, we have academia, we have law enforcement, we have operators.

So the beneficiary is very diverse in this Technical Engagement. And we have a course catalog. We want to also mention that there is a course catalog on technical topic and then available online for the community. It's just a brief graph here to show that we have 35 conducted in person and in 90 countries, these are the activities where really staff is there and then people really have the opportunity to do practical activities.

We mentioned also the DNSSEC and then during the last five years, while some of this were not directly through the coalition because the coalition is one component but a general engagement in something we are focusing on. And then we didn't mention some countries you can also see in that period. Benin, for example, it was in 2022.

So, we have a lot of now countries in the region understanding the importance of the DNSSEC. And then we want also to tend the community because the community also is making pressure on

some ccTLDs to move because we have a better understanding of the importance of having the zone signed for the country.

So, this is briefly what we wanted to share. And then before we open for contribution, I want to mention that as usual, we had a group which developed an order, a plan which started in July this year. And what the strategy area were the participation. Again, we want to broaden the participation. We want to focus on Capacity Development, DNS technical resilience and security and digital inclusion. So, we have the full document through a blog published in July. So, you can go to the link on the document. This document will be on the agenda after the session.

So, when you go there, you have more detail on this document. And we mentioned that we are taking now year by year and we have a plan for every year. And for this fiscal year ending in June, 2026, we plan to continue hosting regional forum, community forum, Universal Acceptance and IDN training. We'll continue on that. And then you have heard the deadline about the UA, the activity, for example.

So on the continent, we have seen many activities in UA Days. We want to continue the engagement with government and regulators to policy awareness sessions. And then again, the Coalition of Digital Africa will have a support and contribute to these objectives. And we will support regional internet governance forum. You may see that we are supporting more than the regional one. Sometimes you have requests for national forum.

What we do, we contribute. We contribute most of them to the national one, but the financial aspect is sometimes limited to the main Africa one and the sub-regional IDFs.

So, in conclusion, what I want to mention is that what we presented, we'll talk more about that, but we want to mention the collaborative approach since the beginning. Because since 2012, NPA mentioned the revision of this strategy. So, we have a collaborative approach where we have the community involvement in that one because we are doing it publicly. Even everyone was able to contribute.

So, we hope to improve during these past years. We started in July. And we have also various partners we are working in. And then we hope to keep, and we'll keep working with them. And what we want to say is that, as you mentioned during this fiscal year, we have a key event happening in Ghana in December.

On December 9, we have what we call the Africa Engagement Forum. So, it's an opportunity really to talk more about what we are doing, to hear specifically about the African in the supporting organization and the advisory committees. So, we had a previous blog posted about this event in Ghana. But in the upcoming days, you'll see more information, how you can register, how you can join this activity in Ghana. You'll have a full day, not 90 minutes as now. We'll have a full day. And ICANN is supporting this activity.

The last one for the Africa Engagement Forum was two years ago. And then we are really inviting you to contribute to the next one.

This report delivered will be, you have a more detailed version by that time. And we have what we call also the DNS Forum. If you see the report, the last one was in 2022. The one, last fiscal year.

So, we'll have another face-to-face one in Ghana. And then we have partners, not only ICANN, we have the AFTLD, Africa Top-Level Domain Organization. And then we have AF Registrars, the Association of ICANN, Acadia Registrar in Africa, who are partnering with us in organizing this. So, that is what I want to say. Maybe Pierre, your audio is better. You may say one word before we open the floor for contribution and question and answer.

So, Pierre, I want to hand over to you. Maybe you have a better audio to conclude before we open the floor. Pierre, over to you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU

Thank you very much, Yaovi. No, I don't think I have solved my connectivity issue, but just want to kind of say that, well, you covered it. I think most important, I think we wanted to share. Of course, the part now is about how do we work better. And we'll be now looking forward to your questions, your contributions, whatever from them. Yeah, so, nothing to really add. You said it is about collaboration. It's about partnership and the coming, maybe one of the things that we notice is that we haven't really worked with the private sector per se in Africa, but this is another story we are going to tell. So, thanks very much. And then, please, Yaovi, back to you again.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much. We want to thank, again, Sally and the Board, the member who are here. So, we want to open the floor now. If you have some question on the Q&A pod, we'll read them. And then, if you want to contribute, because we mentioned that this report is just a part of this report.

The full document will be shared during the engagement forum. So, you are welcome to make contribution. And maybe we didn't mention, we think there's something we have done. You feel free to do that. And then, again, we have a team here and the ICANN staff, you ask question. I will check first if you have something from the Q&A. Not yet, but I don't know. We can take some questions.

So, we take some questions. And then, we have, you just raised your hand. We have one hand there. I want to see if you have more question. First, we take all the questions. We answer this question. And then, we can open another row. So, I can see two hands here on my right here. We have one here. That side, not yet. So, let's take the two questions.

The first one is, just you just introduce yourself, Abdeljalil. You can mention your name and then you contribute or you ask your question. So, we have interpretation in French also, in addition to the English we are speaking. Thank you.

ABDELDJALIL BACHAR BONG My name is Abdeldjalil Bachar Bong. Hello, everyone. Abdeljalil speaking.

YAOVI ATOHOUN Abdeldjalil, please, can you speak a bit loudly? Thank you. You can continue.

ABDELDJALIL BACHAR BONG Yes, my name is Abdeldjalil Bachar Bong. I am from Chad. I will speak in French. I am the vice president incoming of AFRALO. So, I would like to thank the team for everything that you organize in Africa. And we would like to thank the Board, the ICANN Board that is present here and that really helps with the situation in Africa.

For the planning, I would like you to take into account the ICANN grants. I think the ICANN grants can play an important role for awareness and for the ICANN community to make sure we improve connectivities and everything that is going on in Africa. And the meetings in Africa, the ICANN meetings happening in Africa are also very important.

Every year, we should have one meeting, possibly in Africa and African soil. This is quite important for us. And regarding youth programs for young people, it's quite important to pursue those youth programs. We have the fellowships, I know, but we can work with the GSC Africa teams so that young African leaders can be helped. African women as well should be involved in ICANN activities. Thank you very much.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Very much, Abdeldjalil. So, please, over to you, the lady.

SEYI ONASANYA

Good morning, everyone. My name is Seyi Onasanya from the Nigerian registry. So, my question is, as part of the government's engagement and Capacity Building, do you have any form of maybe action plan that relates to increasing adoption of domain in Africa? Because that's a big challenge.

So, I really want to know what exactly you're doing in terms of Capacity Building for government, leveraging regulations, because, I mean, government is like the only platform that can actually help to increase adoption of domains by their citizens, making it compulsory regulation. So, do you have that as part of the plan and what has been done and maybe the experience that you can share as well?

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you. We have the third hand on the back and then we can take the one on the back and then you. Oh, please. Yeah, go ahead.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN

Thank you, Yaovi. I'm Anriette Esterhuysen, African School on Internet Governance. Thank you, congratulations, and thank you for presenting the plan and for continuing with this plan. I want to echo what the previous speaker asked about. I think ICANN, of

course, has a very specific mission, but I think we have to recognize that in the African content, generalized progress and building digital infrastructure access and capacity is slow.

In fact, we have had a reduction in internet penetration after a spike during COVID, it's now down to about 38%. I do feel we need a concerted effort in Africa. Those of us working on connectivity, on infrastructure, on human capacity, on research, on digital public infrastructure, e-government, in fact, on the WSIS action lines. And I wonder if there are any efforts here between institutions like ICANN, ISOC, UNECA, African Development Bank, Smart Africa, if we actually have any opportunity to really increase the attention given by African institutions and governments to addressing this divide because it is actually not getting smaller.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you, Anriette. Please, Angela.

ANGELA WIBAWA

Good morning, everyone. Name is Angela from the .pw ccTLD. It's quite a struggle and a pain to get participation from the African region, especially in the ccNSO committee. And I just wanted to find out from you what's been the observation around the struggle and how are you looking forward to making efforts to get more people sharing and participating in these meetings with the next Strategic Plan? Thank you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you. We take one question and then we'll respond. I think we had a hand. Yeah, no. Okay. We have a hand in the chat. Okay, so let's have Pierre, if you want to address some of this question, Pierre. I'm not sure if you are able to get this question if you want to address them. So, we have also our Board member and Sally here who may have some input. So, Pierre, can you have the microphone?

PIERRE DANDJINOU

Yes. Can you hear me?

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Yes, Pierre.

PIERRE DANDJINOU

Yeah. Thanks very much for those interesting questions. And I'll just speak one or two of them but I'm happy to know that my colleagues are also there and Sally is there. Thanks so much, Sally, for being around. There was a question about the domain name. We actually had developed a study. We had a study on the domain name on the DNS in Africa and where we did have also statistical data about the domain name in Africa and in terms of generic and also the ccTLDs one, the consumption.

I think we were talking about something like in total of 5 million of those names for a population of above a billion. So, that was already a big issue. And there were a few sorts of issue that was

raised in that report that also indicated a few sorts of way to kind of mitigate this issue.

I will not go into those details, but for your question, we need to continue and to kind of spread the word. But at the same time, we need to also be talking to those who can also help mitigate the thing. For instance, the ISPs in Africa, we don't see them much here, for instance, in these meetings. And you are talking about the regulators, for instance, the government as well.

So, there need to be a kind of, that's where the multi-stakeholderism is going to really work so that everyone understands that here is something that we need to be investing on. And we are not doing it. I mean, as we will have a lot of it.

Our observations as GSE Africa, of course, is that we need to be working across the board, many, many people. So, and that's also explain why we did come out with this CDA, which is about, partnering with likewise institutions to kind of rejoin effort so that we really have better impact.

I took some of the sort of thing you are suggesting. We continue, with looking for partners, depending, I mean, if they will buy into this, so what we are calling the internet, integrity, unique and then interoperability of the internet, the security of it. If they buy by this, well, they could be member of the CDA, for instance. But yes, I think there's a great question about what are we doing in Africa? How

much to? I think we need to mobilize more and more people and create those opportunities for the narration about those issues.

We are doing what we can in Africa. And we are also, I mean, we are also open to really continue with the collaboration and the partnership per se. So, yeah, that's what I wanted to insist on with your questions.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you, Pierre. We have Catherine, the Board member who had to attend another meeting, but we had some input she wants to make before. Yeah, we give you the floor. Thank you so much.

CATHERINE ADEYA

Okay. I thought it was something like it was itching. Okay. No, because as I said, there was a conflicting engagement, but there are just three things I wanted to comment on. I think there was one that somebody talked about the grants, knowing what's happening. I'm not sure, but then I thought I would also let the team here know. Yesterday, I attended the LAC space and it was very interesting to see what they're doing. They were sharing what they've done with the grants they've won and how they can impact the work that's being done in the LAC space. And I think I'll challenge the team here that even for Africa.

I think people would like to know what's being done with the people who won the grants, even high level, just some kind of presentation. So, I had meant to say that and it's good it came up.

The second one, Anriette, I think you're on point. You're completely on point. And I think I'll let the team and Sally engage on that because the statistics you're saying are really true. And if we are to engage, you better be able to address some of those. So, I don't want to delve into that further. But the third one, I just wanted to clarify the issue of the ccNSO, the person who asked it. You said it's a struggle. Allow me, it's very important for me as a Board member just to understand, what do you mean by it's a struggle?

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Angela?

ANGELA WIBAWA

Yeah, sure.

CATHERINE ADEYA

Just reintroduce yourself, please.

ANGELA WIBAWA

Okay, yes. Angela again from the .pw Registry. So, what I meant is it's usually really hard to get people to volunteer for presentations and sharing what's happening in regard to ccTLD related work within the ccNSO space. So, I'm not sure if this is something that spills to other groups and all that, but it's something we've observed that it really is a struggle. It's always the same people

presenting and not much of other people that are not involved.
Yeah.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Yeah, thank you. We have some ccNSO council member in the room. They may want to comment on that. I don't know if Bea and Oda are in the room here. So, you are welcome to also tip in to contribute to the response to the ccNSO issue. Yes. So, it is about the ccNSO? Yeah. Please, we introduce yourself. We want to thank first Catherine for her time. She's off all the time. Thank you very much. So, over to you, introduce yourself, and maybe you want to add to the contribution to one of the questions. Go ahead.

WAFDA DAHMANI

Thank you. Yeah, we, I'm Wafa Dahmani. I'm a NomCom ccNSO councilor. About the question of Angela and the participation of the Africans ccTLDs in the ccNSO work. Let me say, for example, for sharing experiences, we have a session of new ccTLD news, and there's always a call before the ICANN meeting to receive application to speak about your ccTLD and share your experience.

We always have an African participation. It's up to African to come. We are encouraging them to come and share their experience and of course, collaborate with the existing, the ones are participating. I hope I responded to your question, Angela. Thank you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much. Maybe Sally wants to maybe say some few words. People mentioned ICANN meetings in Africa. You know the process. Maybe Sally, you want to say something about this or make some input to the questions we have so far?

SALLY COSTERTON

Thank you, Yaovi. Sorry. Now I can just hear myself on the headset. Right, that's better. Yes, meeting in, physically meetings in Africa, generally. As you, I think some of you know, and if you don't, I'll remind you. We have been doing quite a lot of work with you and inside the organization to try to make sure that we take an approach to co-locating meetings as much as possible to save, to maximize the resources, flights, travel, this kind of thing.

And that's been very successful in the last year or so. And many of you will be aware that there is a group of meetings happening in Accra in December, which we will organize. We will co-locate in order to make it easier for you, more people to attend for longer rather. And one of the things that we are very aware of in Africa particularly is there is a, it is hard to fly necessarily east to west.

And that's something that isn't always obvious if you don't live in Africa. And sometimes many of you will have to fly outside Africa to go from east to west, which is very challenging and expensive. So, our co-location strategy is a lot about trying to really get ahead of that and say, where is the optimum places where we can bring our stakeholders together to follow ICANN's work in the region?

So our DNS forum, our engagement forum will happen side-by-side in Accra, for example. So, yes, your question was, could we be in Africa once a year? Yes, I think certainly, probably, hopefully more than once a year. The question I think Yaovi is referring to is these meetings, the large three times a year ICANN meeting and rotating them through Africa. That is a high priority for us.

It is difficult, not for now, but I'm happy to take this as a separate conversation for anybody that wants to talk to us separately about this. And we can bring you up to speed about how, what we need in a country to run an ICANN meeting. And it's on our website, but I do understand that it's complicated and it's not always clear. How do we prioritize things like visa access, from cost, from the convention center itself?

We have a surprisingly complicated set of requirements for what we need from a convention center. And many people think we just need a big space. And so, they'll say, we have a big convention center in our city, why can't we come? But the reality is we need multiple meetings to run things simultaneously, multiple rooms.

Look at us here, for example. I mean, I can't remember off the top of my head, but I think we might have as many as 30 or 40 meetings happening in parallel. That's what makes the convention center discussion difficult. Then we have to make sure that when we found a convention center, that there are sufficient hotel rooms of different levels of cost, close enough to the venue that we don't

have some of our participants traveling for an hour on a bus to get to the convention center.

And on the issue of visas, and I'll tackle it head on since somebody's raised meetings and this is a good opportunity. We will publish, and I've realized that during this meeting it was a short notice meeting. And for many of you coming from African countries, you do not have, there was no e-visa from Ireland. They don't do it. Not all countries do. And there are only seven, I think, embassies that Ireland has in the world in total.

So, I know from speaking to many of you and particularly in this region, that you felt you have to send your passport to countries that you can't possibly visit for multiple weeks. And this made your applications difficult. I understand that. I want to use this opportunity to tell you that we hear you. I also want to let you know that our partners in the Irish government at very short notice were unbelievable.

We had a list of all the applications that we were following from our supported travelers. They had it updated every day. We were working with them and they have been absolutely outstanding. And we only had seven visa denials. And I can tell you as of this morning, we have 1,566 badges that have been picked up.

Now, not all the people, clearly, that went through that. I'm very proud of that. And I want to thank our Irish partners on the record for that because they have been quite exceptional. And I also

wanted to let you know two other things because I know it's very important to this community.

Firstly, we will publish, the SOAC leaders already have this information. So if you're interested, go, Jonathan has this. But you, Jonathan Zuck, I should make that clear from the at-large, but your other community leaders also have this, which is a note from my team, really detailing how we go about the process of visa, supporting you through your visa applications if you are a funded traveler, because we know this can be confusing.

So there are some standard timings that we use. And then finally, many of you will want to go to Mumbai for our next meeting. And you'll hear from our Indian hosts tomorrow, I think. And we have had meetings, extensive meetings with them already. Making sure that we know what they need, how to provide, for example, guidance using videos and PowerPoints on how to fill in there.

They will have an e-visa system for their conference visa, just so that you know. And many of you will probably know the Indians have a hundred embassies around the world. So, this is obviously completely different. I mean, Ireland is a small country. You know, I mean, it's obvious, but you know, those are good to bear those things in mind.

So, we have lent in even more than normal to make sure that our Indian partners really understand our hosts and are working with us. And so far, they have been superb. The host letter, which is what you need. That's what we need to open registration. The

supporting documentation that you need. And I really wanted to take this moment because this is an ideal platform for me to raise this with this community.

So, you'll see a document published on our website after the Dublin meeting that will share that content that I've shared already with the SOAC leaders just for future reference. And then we will update the specific Indian requirements as soon as we can after the meeting. But we're very aware, our Indian partners are very aware that they need to be ready to do that pretty fast after this meeting. So, I hope that's helpful. I think the other points were probably covered by my colleagues.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much, Sally. I think we still have some time. So, we're going to the second round of hands. So, we'll start with our colleague. Yeah, go ahead.

PIERRE BONIS

Thank you, Yaovi. I'm going to speak in French.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Yes, you can speak in French. Yes, definitely. We have interpretation in French, so you can speak in French. Yeah. Thank you very much. Introduce yourself and you have the floor.

PIERRE BONIS

Thank you, Yaovi. Thank you, Sally. This is Pierre Bonis. I'm the General Director of AFNIC.fr. And I wanted to be quick and join the others and congratulate several people in the room. You're very ambitious with this African plan. And this is, I think a very concrete and solid plan that you presented. And I would like to go back to one of the initiatives.

There are several initiatives, but ICANN has other partners, including AFNIC. And one initiative is the Coalition for Digital Africa, this CDA. So, as a partner of this Coalition for Digital Africa, we are always ready to train, ready to help out with the training program and courses. And some aspects of promotion and marketing are not always talked about. And we talk a lot about technical issues.

We talk amongst the ccTLD, DNSSEC is well covered. Automation is covered. However, with our pairs in Africa, we believe that promotion and marketing is extremely important to have a distribution network to self-finance at the end those ccTLD so that they can develop their business.

Business development should be really emphasized. This is very important. And we try to bring that to the table and exchange about how we can market at the national level, the national extension, the ccTLD. This is quite important to pay the engineers, train the engineers and the staff. So, we need to do the marketing. And my question will be about that.

We have these partnerships and we have the International Telecommunication Union, ITU. I don't know where they are. They

are in Geneva. I know where ITU is, but I never hear about the International Telecommunication Union. They have a big conference in Baku in a few days. They'll be in Baku. Do you know about ITU? Have you heard from them? What is going on? Are they part of the coalition?

And regarding this digital coalition, does the CDA is present, is the CDA present in this conference? The participation in the ITU came from Toric Bogdan when she was at the head of telecommunications development. So, I do not understand if there is a political or policy issue. I think that ITU should know more about us and what we do. Thank you

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you. Maybe Sally will add to that. But I want to mentioned that your contribution was a response to one of the questions from that lady. Through the Capacity Development, I'm not sure if you have your ccTLD in that group, but a participant had the opportunity to get experience from auDA on how to improve the use of the ccTLDs. So, it's a good contribution. But about ITU, I want to ensure you that we have ITU as a partner in the coalition, and Badiel is the one representing in the partners meeting.

He used to be in the coalition's partners meeting. So, we still have ITU. And then we are planning to have a meeting with the coalition's partners during the Accra event. And the last aspect is

about the ITU event. I want to, I'm sure you want to mention the WTDC.

So, ICANN will be there. We'll have on the agenda on the 28th of November, we have a small session on the 28th, again, to talk about the coalition so that we can see the interests of other partners. So, definitely, ICANN is working closely with all the partners. We were in the preparation meeting for the Africa region with ITU in Africa, in Cote d'Ivoire recently. And then definitely we are planning to be, also ICANN will be in Baku in that conference. ICANN's team will be there. Maybe Sally, you want to add more on that?

SALLY COSTERTON

I think you covered it well, Yaovi. The big question that you raised in the first part of your comments, also I'm sure our colleagues in the ccNSO would have a point of view on this bigger question of how do we help individual CCs, in this case in Africa, but truly around the world, to what is ICANN's role?

What can we do to help them to understand how to maximize their businesses? Because ccTLDs usually, not always, but many of them are businesses. And there are very different, many very different models around the world as to how CCs are constructed.

One end, some of them are effectively departments of the government, and at the other end, they're large private companies and there's kind of everything in between. So, I think working with our colleagues inside ICANN, Bart, I think you probably know Bart,

Bart is, of course you know, and I know that, but I want the room to understand this, that I think that there is a big, we can always do more, Pierre, together within the ccNSO channels.

I want us to avoid being siloed inside the organization and I think, so I take that on Board. I mean, I hear what you say and I think it's important. Yaovi is talking about what we do in the CDA with you, with AFNIC, but also with the ITU. Doreen was very instrumental in creating the CDA. They were one of the founder partners of the ITU with ICANN and they continue to be very active.

So, what I would hope is that we keep this discussion very much alive. I don't want us to think that we are done or that we're finished and there isn't more work to do. And I think what you're raising, this is very helpful to remind us that, we need to stay very focused because it's a very big task. Thank you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much. We can take two more questions before the end of this session. We can take two more questions and then we'll use the rest of the time for some announcements. So, we have one hand there and then one hand at the back. So, these are the two questions. And I want to thank also people who are contributing online. We have a lot of comments and discussion going on online. So, we acknowledge the participation of those who are not here, but really contributing. So, please, over to you.

HADIA ELMINIAMI

Thank you so much, Yaovi. This is Hadia Elminiawi for The Record. I'm also an AFRALO Chair. And I just took the mic in order to congratulate you on the Africa Global Stakeholder Engagement Regional Plan. And to also mention that AFRALO did contribute to the development of the plan. We were part of the team that was developing the plan.

So, thank you for giving us the opportunity to develop with you the regional plan. And then I would also to say that AFRALO in developing its FY26 Outreach and Engagement Plan, we went ahead and we developed a five-year Strategic Plan that aligns with ICANN Africa Regional Plan and with ICANN Strategic Plan as well. And thus, our outcomes and activities that are outlined in our Outreach and Activity Plan aligns with the overall plans and activities that you have outlined. Thank you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much, Hadia, for your contribution. The last question, over to you.

ADEBUNMI AKINBO

Thank you, Yaovi. Adebunmi Akinbo for the record. I want to respond and quickly ask if the social enterprise within Africa need to do anything spectacular to get probably partnership or engagement or probably, we should start empowering the average African “youth women” would need to be interested in ICANN and

other things that AFRALO is doing very well at before we can get an attention.

I'm saying this in relation to different mails we have sent in with our response. Take for example, the new ICANN plan, the five-year plan. It would be good if the, sorry, not specific to governments, the African governments and stakeholders understand this. So, if we have a social enterprise within the ecosystem, the ICANN ecosystem, I think we should pay attention to what they want to do to bridge a gap that is needed. So, is there a particular process we need to go through? Is there a particular person we need to send a mail to get a response so that we can take up action? Thank you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much. My answer is that we will suggest we continue the discussion on that. GSEAfrica@ICANN.org. For those who are also joining remotely, GSEAfrica@ICANN.org. You can send a message and then definitely we'll continue. And this is why Sally mentioned that ICANN is now supporting the regional Africa engagement forum.

So, ICANN is trying to bring also a representative from various SOs, ACs in Ghana, and we have a full day. We'll continue the discussion. We have just less three minutes, but before that, I want to mention that in our engagement and activity, we are really supported by very teams in Africa.

And we have Bahar Esmat, who is managing the regional office in Istanbul. So, it's not just people I mentioned before. We have the whole ICANN staff from LA to mainly the staff in Istanbul, also supporting activities. Like recently, we have a webinar with ICANN accredited registrar. So, they were happy about the outputs and our colleagues from that office also work closely with us.

So, just to share how also as staff, we are working closely with other colleagues to maybe contribute to the development. So, these are the information. The announcement about more detail about the Accra events will be publishing soon when the registration is open.

Then we just have one minute, and after that, we'll take the group picture. But I want maybe Sally have some few words before I hand over to Pierre to conclude. Sally, you may say some final remarks before Pierre concludes, and then we take the group picture. Over to you, Sally.

SALLY COSTERTON

Thank you, Yaovi. I know my final remarks is just to congratulate you on how much progress you've made. I liked what Hadia was saying. I think it's so good to hear how much coordination there is and really feels like we're coming together around that focus, that much more sort of spearhead focus on delivering on the Strategic Plan outcomes, but ensuring that, for example, one of those is increasing participation from underrepresented groups.

This is a very big area, and a lot of the things we've talked about today will play into those. So, I'm really looking forward to taking this on into the next stage, and thank you very much for a really interesting discussion this morning.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Thank you very much, Sally. For those who are online, our sincere apologies if for someone which didn't answer the question directly. We'll take note of all these questions, and then Pierre, you want to say the closing words for this meeting, Pierre? Over to you.

I think we have a connection issue with Pierre. So, on behalf of the whole ICANN team, the staff, we want to thank you very much for participation. We hope to see you in Ghana. We hope to see you all in Ghana or remotely. So, thank you very much, and Amina, we are at the end of the session. We can end the recording.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]