
ICANN84 | AGM – At-Large Plenary 2: Increasing capacity in underserved regions-registries and registrars
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MICHELLE DESMYTER

Hello, welcome everyone to the At-Large Plenary 2, Increasing Capacity in Underserved Regions, Registries and Registrars. My name is Michelle DeSmyter, and I am the Remote Participation Manager for this session today. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

During the session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. Interpretation will include English, French, and Spanish. If you would like to speak during the session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom.

On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record, the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English. And please speak at a reasonable pace. I will now hand the floor over to Jonathan Zuck, ALAC Chair, and Owen Smigielski, Chair of the Registrar Stakeholder Group. Please begin.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Thank you, and thanks everyone for attending this session. I'm really excited to be doing this session in conjunction with the Registrar Stakeholder Group. I think we share an interest in seeing

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growth in the contracted party community into underserved regions, right?

It's really had a high concentration in a few areas for a long time now, and it applies to both registrars and registries, and in fact, it's possible that one is dependent on the other. In other words, the success of registries in the underserved regions may depend on seeing more registrars appearing in those areas. And so, again, I think this is a great partnership. Excited to be here, and Owen, I give you a chance to say hello as well.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Sure. Thank you, Jonathan. Owen Smigielski, from the Registrar Namecheap, and I'm the current Chair of the Registrar Stakeholder Group. This is an idea that Jonathan had brought up before when we were planning potential sessions for a SSAC meeting, and it actually dovetailed with something that the registrars discussed after the Prague meeting.

We had a strategy session full day, so we got to spend an extra day all together, and we had a whole bunch of outputs out of there, and one of them was from a specific experience that a registrar experienced about wanting to get more registrars involved. So, we'll come to that a little bit here, but it's good to see that this is a topic.

There's a lot of excitement around the Next Round of New gTLDs and Applicant Support, but one thing that's always missing is

support for registrars. There's a lot of structures and attention paid to bringing more registries on board, but it would be good to also have more registrars because you need those local partners to help make new TLDs be a success. With that, I think back to you.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Yeah, thanks. I think we both have just recently got out of meetings with the Board and expressed similar concerns in a way, or analogous concerns, if nothing else, because, I mean, part of the issue associated with the Applicant Support Program and registries is that just getting into the application process might not be enough handholding for registries to become part of the program, and there may be sort of institutional overhead, if you will, that unnecessarily makes it burdensome on both registries and registrars in underserved regions.

And so, I think that's partly what we're trying to look at today is not the programs to convince people to join, but what are the systemic issues that make it difficult for them to participate as contracted parties. And so, we thought we'd start first with some of the issues faced by new registries and smaller registries in underserved regions. And as someone that has supported some of those applicants, we asked Edmon Chung to join the panel. So, go ahead, please.

EDMON CHUNG

Thank you. And as Jonathan was saying, one of the things that were put in place by ICANN is, of course, the Applicant Support Program. One of the interesting things about that, and we were just in the board discussion, and I think Jonathan made a very good point, is that a lot of the implementation is predicated on a lot of risk-averse risk containment, but in order to really handhold, we probably need to lean more towards handholding than this kind of risk-averse.

And I wanted to highlight a few of this to start with, and then some of the other barriers of entry. But first of all, the interesting thing about the Applicant Support Program now that is put in place is, of course, there are what I would call 4+1 measures that provide support. There's the application fee reduction, there's non-financial support, there's bid credit, there's further reduction in the base registry agreement fee, and then the board also added a string replacement mechanism.

However, these few, if next slide, please, out of these, next slide, please, no, next slide, because I want to highlight the-- can we go to the next slide? Oh, no worries. Well, basically, the next slide is just to highlight that a couple of them, which is critical, essentially is almost futile.

Maybe I'm being censored. I don't know what to do. Okay. No worries. Oh, there we go. All right. No, the slide before. There we go. Yeah, basically I wanted to highlight that, yes, the reduced

application fee is useful. The reduced registry agreement fee is useful. Oops, the one before. Just don't want to be here.

So, yeah, the non-financial support, yeah, kind of great, but, yeah, it's good to have. But the bid credit is really sorry for my I can't speak, but not fit for purpose. And the string replacement mechanism is also problematic, and I'll highlight that.

So, basically, the bid credit is essentially tokenism, because 35% off an auction that is likely going to go up to a million dollars means that an NGO or an Applicant Support applicant will have to pay like hundreds of thousands or up to a million dollars, and that's by default. I mean, by design, the eligibility doesn't allow that. Discounts, perhaps, in line with the application fee, like maybe 75% or 80%, might be able to help.

String replacement mechanism attempts to be one of the supports as well, but I don't know if people have looked into the details, but here's an interesting case. The most-simple case, actually, the current string replacement mechanism fails.

Let's say two applicants, each interested in “.eggplant”, you know, and that's their first option, and, well, there's the more resourced commercial applicant that wants “.eggplant”, and applicant B, who's an ASP applicant, also wants “.eggplant”, and they put in the second option as “.aubergine”. You know, okay, if I don't get “.eggplant”, I get “.aubergine”, but that is not allowed. If the

applicant B wants to replace their string with their “.aubergine” option, that's actually not allowed.

That simple case currently, as implemented, in fact, doesn't allow this so that the ASP applicant can actually avoid contention. So, this is kind of interesting. There is also an assumption of the myth that ASP applicants are going to apply for their organization name as a TLD or a community name, but actually, let's say a small business from a developing region, they want to apply for generic names that have some market value, even if it is something that the commercial applicants don't want in the first place. And that's not really supporting.

And I think that's the last part. So, on top of that, one of the things, the interesting things that new registries face is that whereas on one hand, there is a requirement for equal treatment to registrars, and there is also the vertical integration that allows for startup registry, but unless there's already a registrar, it's not really that useful to have to build both a registry and a registrar together.

That's I think is a daunting task, to say the least. And the way to maybe fix it is to think about potentially requiring a mutual situation where at least some of the large ones to provide some level of service to New gTLDs, that could be that could really, really help. But, of course, that's not currently being discussed.

There is also lack of local registrars. That is very difficult, it would be very difficult for registries to reach these, to reach end customers in the underserved regions. And the increasing policy

requirements both for registries and registrars, that is limiting some of the things. And I will leave with one last interesting observation.

There is a tremendous favorable treatment for brands, especially this round, because they are not only allowed to do a replacement string, they can even have a change of string, and there's no disincentive for brands not to engage in some sort of a defensive gaming that I call, which is, for example, .adidas. They will put in a replacement string for .sneakers just to block off potential applicants who put in it as a secondary string for .sneakers.

And that's a very interesting observation in my mind, but that is a known issue, and we're going to see it in the applicant guidebook. But the most important part, I think, which I'll leave it to Owen and the discussion, is that the biggest face is, the biggest new registries face is actually getting local registrars that can actually reach the end customers, and that's one of the challenges. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Thanks, Edmon. And, Avri, did you want to add anything to that as far as? Okay. We'll move over to the registrar side.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

All right. Thank you. So, if you are not in the Zoom room, I please do encourage you to join the Zoom, because we are going to start off with some poll questions here. That's something we like to do in the registrar stakeholder group, so I'm bringing that to this one

here as well, too. So I'm going to do a brief overview of some of the concerns, and then I'm going to pass it on to some of the registrars who have experience with this issue as well, too.

So, first, this is going to be a poll question. So, if we can pop up the first poll question, and it is, I just looked the other day on ICANN's website. They have a list of all ICANN-accredited registrars. There are 3,012 of them. How many of them are from underserved regions? And, again, this is perhaps not as accurate, because it was me doing it manually and sorting through all 3,000-plus names.

So, please go ahead and do vote there and see how many of them we think are from underserved regions. And that's basically just not the United States, Europe, and more industrialized countries.

A couple more minutes, or a couple more seconds. Please do vote. All right. Can we see the results? B was the most chosen answer, and that is actually the correct one, 39. So, out of all those registrars, and, again, this is based upon primary contact address locations, so it may not be as accurate, but it just does highlight that there's a lot of countries out there that do not have registrars in those regions. Reg?

REG LEVY

Thanks. Is there a list of those countries that are considered underserved? How are we defining that?

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

That was just kind of me looking at what are places that are outside of the common areas where registrars are located and what we have participating in the stakeholder group, so primarily Africa, South Africa, Latin America.

REG LEVY

So, fives?

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Yeah, again, that was just me making that determination. I didn't have a whole thing in analysis and whatnot, but this was just kind of a rough estimate there. ICANN didn't have any data on that, so I just kind of had to go at it like that. Okay. Next slide. Oh, Michele?

MICHELE NEYLON

Yeah, it's kind of a similar question. I mean, the thing is, there's been multiple sessions and discussions around underserved. It needs to be clearly defined, because there is a very strong argument that in many respects there are things being served there.

Now, that doesn't mean, of course, that there shouldn't be registrars and registries from the region, but stating that as if underserved means somehow that they are second- or third-class citizens of the Internet and all that, it seems a little bit off in terms of language. I think we need to have a bit more nuance around that. Thanks.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Sure. Well noted, and that was raised earlier, and that's the term we came up with for this discussion, but happy to consider and work on other things as well, too. So, the next thing is, the question is, if we put the poll question up, it says, ICANN requires registrar applicants to demonstrate how much, "liquid working capital". Choices are A, 5,000. These are U.S. dollars. B, 50,000. C, 70,000. Or D, 150,000. So, go ahead and get the vote in. Okay, if we can see the poll results. C, 70,000 was the most chosen answer, and that is also correct.

ICANN requires that. It doesn't have to be cash in the bank, but it has to be readily available or convertible there, so we'll come back to that later. Next slide and next poll question. Uh-oh. My Zoom just disconnected here.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Don't give away the answers.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Because I can't read it. Yeah, so ICANN's registrar accreditation application form comprises how many questions, and this is not including subparts, A, 6, B, 20, C, 58, or D, 1,963,871. Having completed an application a couple years ago, it is long and tedious. Okay, get your votes in.

Yes, everyone picked C, or the most picked C. That is the correct answer, 58. There's actually one question that was removed, which

has to do with general liability insurance, but I will touch on that in a little bit. Next slide and next question, please. I'm going to have to crib off of Jonathan's computer again.

How many words are there in the 2013 RAA? That's the agreement that all registrars are bound contractually with ICANN. A is 43, B, 3,291, C, 15,822, and D, 26,231. I did not count these. I let Word do the counting for me. Oh, we need the new poll. Sorry, that did not pop up yet.

Technology makes everything easier until it's not. For those online, we are still experiencing technical-- There we go. Okay. And the next slide. Okay. Oh, sorry, the poll is this. That's right, I lost track of myself. So, please do vote with the poll. How many words are in the 2013 RAA?

All right, another 10 seconds. Okay, if we can show the results. This time, actually, D is the correct answer. Yes, it's a very long document. There's a lot of things that registrars have to do and comply with in there. Okay, we've got one more. Do the next slide and the next poll, please.

How many ICANN consensus policies are there? Your choices are 6, 8, 14, or 22. And as Michele is noting in the chat, the contract does not include the consensus policies, but all those consensus policies are binding upon registrars and registries. Okay, if we can see the results.

The correct answer is C, 14. It seems like there's 22 or more, but yes, eventually, there will be more in there as well, too. Okay, next slide, please. So, I just want to just say ahead of time, before I go into this, that I'm not complaining about complying with ICANN requirements. That's something that all registrars and registries need to do as contracted parties. It's there for a reason, to make sure that we operate properly, registrants are protected. But it can get expensive to do this, and I think that's lost a lot of times during the policy development process, is when there are changes to these policies, registrars have to spend time and money to comply with them.

The RAA has some significant requirements in there. There have been three versions of the RAA. The 2001 to the 2009 was a slight change. But then the 2013 RAA had some significant changes to it, and it really increased the workload on a lot of registrars. I was looking around the table, seeing the ones who were here then, and realizing that was quite a bit of stuff we had to work through.

And that ended up leading to a number of registrars either being breached, terminated, or just voluntarily de-accrediting to become resellers, because it was easier and more cost-effective for them to be a reseller of another registrar than to go ahead and comply and do that work internally. But when that happens, you then lose that voice at the table.

They're not allowed to join an ICANN stakeholder group. They can't participate in the PDPs, and so that's really a disservice, and that

kind of drives down the availability of registrars to participate. There's also ICANN compliance audits that can be, depending upon the scope, sometimes they're narrow, sometimes they're very broad, and that can take a lot of time in order to provide all of those documents there.

Again, I don't want to imply that these are bad things. I'm just pointing out that there's always costs associated with those. And there's some other things that also impact registrars from the general North America, United States, is language concerns. People might not have a competency in English, and boy, that RAA gets very legalese.

It wasn't drafted by laypeople. You know, trying to interpret what that means, how you translate certain words. I know there have been some complications and errors with ICANN translations. When the 2013 RAA was originally translated into Chinese, the word for transfer domain name was the word that referred to birds flying.

So, there's clearly a little bit of a concern there because it was just incomprehensible to some people. So, there is outreach by the registrars and by ICANN, but that can only do so much. Next slide, please. As I mentioned earlier, when there's policy changes, there is a cost to do that, to comply, to train your team. If you're doing things like UDRP lock, then you have to put new systems in place.

The UDRP lock also has a very quick turnaround time. We're discussing Urgent Requests and timelines associated with that. Some talk is you have to respond within 24 hours. If you're a small

registrar and you've got five people on your team, that might be really difficult to do. I'm not saying we shouldn't have that for urgent requests, but I just want to highlight that that could be a significant burden either financially or personnel-wise on people as well, too.

And then the temporary specification dealing with the GDPR had, again, some significant amounts of work that registrars were given a pretty short timeline in order to adapt to that. And as I mentioned earlier, some registrars just show that it's easier to become a reseller. That takes the burden off of them from having to deal with all of the complications of doing that. But then again, you lose out on it, you may not get as much money, and also you lack that ability to participate directly in some of the ICANN processes.

Now, this is what originally brought this to us, our attention, and this came out of the Registrar Stakeholder Group Strategy Session in Prague. It was an experience about how there was a registrar-sponsored event in Rwanda, and some of them expressed concern about this fee in here, which says that a registrar has to have \$70,000 U.S. or more in working capital.

Again, that's not money in the bank, but that's something they can easily convert to do that to have funds available for that. And they have to be able to demonstrate that just to even get over that bar to get into the accreditation process. If you can't demonstrate that, then you can't go forward. So, we'll come back to that later. So, next slide, please.

I just realized that this is actually -- I have an incorrect thing on the slide here. I forgot to correct this. I originally thought there were exemptions that could be granted. I'll update the slides later so that it's accurate for later. But there isn't really a way that that amount can be reduced. You can't -- so you have \$20,000 or something along those lines.

We also don't know where that \$70,000 figure came from. Somebody created it a long time ago. We don't know where, why, when, how. And that can be enough to just drive people out of the business there. And if you're a reseller already and you have a business, you've been in business for seven years and you're operational, growing, if you can't demonstrate those \$70,000, that's a hard block to you.

Just some numbers on there. These aren't exact numbers, but I was looking up how much is that amount going to be versus the United States or, say, in Ireland versus how much more things that would be in Brazil or Argentina. We're seeing 50 to 800 times more in terms of costs and stuff like that there. And this is kind of-- I was doing a little -- this isn't exact science. This was me looking at some things that might be applicable, office space, salaries, technology, electricity. But the cost of doing -- it's much lower in those countries.

And so, \$70,000 in the United States is a lot different than, say, \$70,000 in Rwanda. So, this isn't necessarily coming up with a solution. But this is just highlighting an issue that we've known.

There are entities that want to participate and want to become ICANN accredited registrars, and this specifically is blocking them from being able to do so.

Bringing this up, I mentioned that ICANN removed a question from the questionnaire. There used to be an RAA requirement that registrars would have general liability insurance. That was kind of like an on-premise type of insurance. And it was impossible for some registrars to be able to get that. And I think the limit was \$500,000 or something like that.

The ICANN Board decided to remove that requirement. So, it is possible for ICANN to remove barriers for entities and parties that want to be registrars. And so, this is kind of the first step in an effort is, what can we do as either community or ICANN organization or the Board in terms of being able to remove these types of barriers?

You know, we do have, with the Next Round of New gTLDs, there's an Applicant Support Program. There's a lot of support, attention to getting companies in who might not otherwise be a registry, but there's nothing like that for registrars. And so, perhaps there's a way to encourage not saying that we want companies that don't have the technical or financial ability to be a registrar to become one, but just allow those who can and who might not have that amount of money in the bank or readily available to do that.

So, we just want to raise the bar we don't want to necessarily raise the bar, but want to level the playing field so they can do that. And just one more thing also. Once you become an ICANN accredited

registrar, congratulations, then you have to get accredited with every single TLD. And this can be an extremely tedious process. Every single one, you want .com, .net, .org, .whatever, you have to go through and get accredited for each of them.

So, there's still ongoing costs to become a registrar, which is why we want to make sure that you don't block somebody ahead of time from doing that who will have to dedicate resources later. Next slide. Okay, I'm going to pass it over to Prudence.

PRUDENCE MALINKI

Thanks, Owen. Hi, everyone. My name is Prudence Malinki. I don't have any slides, so it's not going to be a fancy presentation. I'm going to share an experience that happened to you, it happened to us, that also kick-started this dialogue that's now actually gone up to Board level and ICANN.

So I'm the head of global industry relations for corporate registrar, and during the meeting in Kigali last year, we were invited by the local registry to host an event for the local registrars, and we jumped at the opportunity to do some meaningful outreach with other registrars on the ground, and have some really good, salient conversations with them, to learn about their experiences, to hear their pain points, and to understand where they are with regards to their businesses and growth, and to discuss potential opportunities to help, and to get everyone to talk to each other,

and just to kind of facilitate dialogue. And we really relished the chance to do that.

Whilst we organized this event, we had ICANN very kindly participate as well, to provide some input and some perspective, and to share their insights with regards to Next Round and developments from their side as well. So, we've kind of given a comprehensive update to the registrars in the region.

Now, it was a really good event. Everyone had a good time. There were lots of discussions. Everyone was happy. But there was one glaring piece of feedback that was said over and over again by multiple registrars on the ground at the event, and it was directly aimed at ICANN, and it was during the discussion related to the Next Round.

When ICANN took the time to really greatly explain, you know, what's happening, get everyone excited and engaged, the registrars that were at the event, and we had a number of registrars, their feedback was simply, wow, this sounds amazing, wow, this sounds fantastic. We would love to participate, but we're not accredited with you. We don't have a relationship with you. We want to. We'd love to be part of ICANN.

We want to do this. We want to engage with this, but we can't because of these fees, that working capital requirement. It's a barrier to us, and we can't do it.

And they just asked very directly at the time, can you help us? Can you reduce this? Is there something we can do? Can we do something so we can participate because we want to? And unfortunately, the feedback was, no, not really. You know, this is what it is, and we are where we are.

And I didn't want that to be the overwhelming message, so we kind of segued and we tried to make sure the registrars could talk to each other, but it became apparent, and this is something that Owen kind of touched on before, a lot of the registrars on the ground that were at the event were not even attending the ICANN event in Kigali.

So, there's an ICANN event being hosted in their country, and they're not there. They're not there because not only are they not accredited with ICANN, when you're not accredited with ICANN, you don't have a relationship with them. You don't know who they are. They don't work with you. You don't know them.

And when you want to get to know them, and they're there in your area, and this is how you meet them, by them telling you about something that you can't engage with, that you can't touch, that you can't feel, it was just very eye-opening to me. And it became very apparent that we should be doing more to try and engage with registrars who want the opportunity to participate and engage, and we have an obligation to try and at least explore how to do that, and how to do that in a meaningful way.

So, those registrars who want to do things and who want to participate, who want to be a part of the ecosystem, can be a part of the ecosystem. And during that event, I kind of came away and I was like, okay, we need to feed this back to people. And during our strategy session as registrars, we all came together and we started talking about pain points, areas of interest, and I fed this back that this has happened, and that registrars in Kigali were not only not able to become accredited, that weren't even able to be real registrars that were reselling, because, again, they didn't have the right kind of accreditation.

So, as Owen was alluding to, they're not fully-fledged registrars, they're reselling other people's services, so they don't have the opportunity to do that.

And we need to, as a registrar group, try and see if there's a way that we can help and support and lend hands to those who want to participate and be part of us. And then when they're there, we can obviously support and do other things, but we have to figure out a way to make it more accessible. And then Owen's done some fantastic job with getting engagement.

The rest of the group has been really fantastic with kind of sharing ideas and how we should go about it, and we had a really good initial dialogue with the Board earlier this week, which was well-received, and I think it's the beginning of us trying to make some genuine progress to being as diverse as we can be, right, and really kind of engaging the multistakeholder model, but even from a

registrar's sense and trying to get as many global engagement registrars as possible.

And I'm going to stop speaking, because I want to open the floor to Niyonsaba, who's part of a KiTech registrar based in Kigali, who's actually going to just tell you how he's experienced working and trying to be a registrar on the ground in Kigali itself. So, Niyonsaba, the floor is yours. Thanks.

NIYONSABA FRIDOLIN

Thank you so much for that. I hope you can hear me. I'm joining this session online. Right now, I'm in Kigali. So, my name is Niyansaba Fridolin, and I am representing KiTech, a Rwandan technology company that operates as a registrar under the LRW registry managed by LIKTA. Foundational, we are a software development company.

We are specializing in helping small businesses and entrepreneurs to establish online presence. So, we have a model which packages domain registration, hosting, including other tools that we think they are necessary, viable to our local market.

So, our current setup, as I mentioned, we are working under LIKTA, the LRW registry. And also, we are partnering with other international and local players for hosting email, something like that. But let me hit straight to the point of the accreditation challenge. For us in Kigali, it seems like this is something that is not existing in our environment.

Because out of 52 LRW registrars, 40 of them are here in Kigali, but none of them is accredited. Why? Because we are very glad to have had the session with Mac Monitor. They have taken us through all the necessary steps. But the challenge is that even attending, when we see that it's ICANN, we feel like this is the company that is managing everything. But it is really high, like it's beyond our reach to go into the accreditation process.

That's why at KiTech, we did choose to focus on LRW. Right now, we are only selling LRW. When it comes to other gTLDs, we reach out to our other partners. So, we are just resellers for other domain names. But we believe the accreditation still matters because this is something that can open more opportunity for us because we are really putting a lot of effort. We are even building, as I said, at KiTech, we have started working three years back. But now we are really touching a big number of entrepreneurs locally.

And extending out of Rwanda is really a challenge because you cannot sell LRW out of your country. And even in our country, a lot of people are asking, we want these other domains. But that is because we don't find any business in need because it's really hard for us. So, we channel those customers to other registrars.

So, by closing, I would like to suggest if we can have a balanced and flexible accreditation program, we need all to be able to be part of this. And I believe after this session, maybe we will come with something that is going to help us. Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my perspective.

Thank you so much for Prudence and Mac Monitor. You've been opening our eyes to, and I believe we will be able to reach, to get more opportunity in the coming future. Thank you so much.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Thank you very much, Niyonsaba, for sharing those experiences. It's good to, you know, it's one thing for us to talk about, but you to provide your experiences and really do appreciate that. Just one other thing I want to highlight that the Registrar Stakeholder Group is doing as part of that strategy session.

We are trying to do outreach internally to get other registrar members involved. Also trying to partner with ICANN to do some outreach to get registrars outside of the ICANN community involved in the Registrar Stakeholder Group. We now also have an observer Pilot Program where an ICANN accredited registrar can join as an observer for six months and see what the Registrar Stakeholder Group does.

And we've also changed our membership structure to a tiered membership, which will give us some flexibility, and we are considering ways to provide discounted membership for registrars who demonstrate a financial need for that. So, we're doing other things to try and broaden the involvement of registrars within the Registrar Stakeholder Group and the ICANN community. I've got a hand from Mouhamet.

MOUHAMET DIOP

Hello.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

We can hear you.

MOUHAMET DIOP

Oh, thank you. Thank you, Chair. I think that I take this opportunity to share some of the experience because it's called a registrar experience.

And I think that being one of the first to be present in Africa, my name is Mouhamet Diop and I'm the CEO of Kheweul.com, who have been accredited in 2007. Since then, I mean, I can say that the first one to be there was one from South Africa in 2000, same year, early one or two months before, and then I get accredited.

So, Internet Solution was the one in South Africa who has been the first one. I think that experience helped a lot just for people to understand that when we talk about underserved region, Africa is one of the most exposed in terms of numbers, in terms of presence. And I think that we have two main challenges. The first one is to become; the second one is to participate through the engagement process.

Being present, I mean, to be accredited, there was many challenges that I can have already faced in the past, tried to raise this number. I can tell you that from 2007 to now, there's only 14 that have been accredited in Africa, which is a very, very, very small number.

In 2011, there was a program where ICANN was trying to push to have an objective of 25 at least registered in Africa, but there was not any supporting program that allowed people to go through the pass. And one of the barriers that people raise here is the money barrier is not the only one that is the most challenging.

The most challenging comes with our experience. We face different challenges. I think that people who want to get on board, there have been some experience that can be done at the ICANN level or at the registrar constituency level to push for. But to be honest, people do not see the need of having more registrar in the continent because the way that the registrar operates is just like an open market where a registrar in South Africa or a registrar in Dublin or a registrar in the U.S. can operate in Africa without needing to have anything else.

So, when we try to build a new ecosystem where people are going to try to push more for local presence, like the reseller to become registrar or to help smalls to grow up, there was no provision in that market. So, I think that we really need to know that the more registrar we're going to have in underserved region, the more experience based on the quality standard we're going to have, because to become a registrar, they have so many conditions that you need to fulfill, especially in terms of expertise, knowing the procedure in terms of compliance.

I mean, you're facing so many things that money is just one issue in it. And I think that we all understand that the biggest problem when we become registrar in Africa is the size of your market.

Many local registrars just stick on their local business with the ccTLD, but we know that it's not a big market at all. If you look at the numbers, all Africa combined, I mean, look at the stat.

So, for me, anything that I can or the registrar constituency can do to remove barriers will help to have more people available, more people onboarding. I raised the issue yesterday regarding the fees. At the time where I was very active in the registrar constituency, the fees was 300 something. And they wake up one day, they raise it up to 1000 and they are looking for people who did not, I mean, who are struggling to make the business locally to run, compliant with all the fees that ICANN was making on top of it.

So, adding any other expenses and expecting people to be more present end up with something that none of us want to happen. We all want to have a registrar that represent all the interests of small and big. And if you think that way, any initiative that allows smalls to be more active has to be welcome.

And I think that this is where I expect the registrar constituency to think about anything that will be a new condition or a policy or whatever that come back to the initial settlement where a small registrar can put on the table small fees just based on their revenue. This is going to be more-fair because a small registrar like

Kweweul.com cannot compete with GoDaddy regarding the numbers of, I mean, the revenue they get, the margin they have.

We're not in the same in the same foot. But the beauty of our model is big and small together build the policies. And we did not give voice based on the numbers of registrar you have. We give voice on the registrar constituency because you are a registrar. No matter if you register 10 domains or million domains or 10 million domains, you're a member of that community. And that's the beauty of that multi-stakeholder model. And I think that if we lose that and end up with having less and less registrar active in this underserved region, we are not gaining.

We are gaining if we have all smalls and big onboarding together in order to build policy that sounds in the interest of the whole community. And that's the message I just want to share here. So, let's think about how we can help small registrar in all underserved region to be more present.

We are not looking to be observer. No, we don't want to be observer. We want to be fully qualified to vote, to decide and to put our energy into what we are trying to build together, not being observer because we don't have enough money to pay the fees into the registrar constituency.

No, I mean, we want things to be smoother and then allow people to onboard more easily because if we fail to comply with our policy, with our fees on ICANN, we are no longer registrar. So, we are

registrar because we fulfill all our duties. So, think about this because I'm here since 2000.

And before I become just a registrar, I'm on the ICANN board since 1998, since the beginning. So, I have been onboarding on ICANN as a registrar. I was on the Board of director for more than three years. So, when I try to raise my voice, it's because I see a risk coming and the registrar constituency will gain to have more registrar in underserved region to be onboard and to remove the barrier that has the fees that is there because people want to join, but they have barriers.

And this is a message I just want to share. And the more ICANN presence we're going to have, the more onboarding guide we're going to have in underserved region, the more ICANN will represent the interests of the whole community. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Yeah, we really need to move on to the discussion part of this if we can. But thank you for all those inputs and I really appreciate them. I actually want to go back to something that Michele said, because I think we're making an assumption in the At-Large community that there's some innate value and we don't know how to measure it or anything like that, that people are served by registrars and registries that are local to them, that there's some value in that and I don't know how to measure that.

And I guess that when we talk about underserved communities, which is really the term used more often than regions, I think that's what we're referring to, because obviously they can all try to get .com names if they want to and they can get them from registrars that are outside of their local area. But is there a value and do you agree that there's a value to different cultural perspectives, different credit scenarios, et cetera, that would serve local areas and communities at least differently if there were more providers that were local to them? That's the assumption we're coming from.

MICHELE NEYLON

Jonathan, its Michele. I think this is part of it. It's nuanced. It's not a simple it's this or it's that. I mean, I think there's definitely nuance. So, speaking on behalf of my company, I think right now there are three, maybe four ICANN accredited registrars legally set up in this country, in Ireland.

When we became accredited, I think there was only one. We were the only one for quite some time. Now, prior to becoming ICANN accredited, we were a reseller for an American company, for the .coms and the other gTLDs that existed at the time. But, of course, we had direct relationships with our local ccTLD and with other ccTLDs. And I think you'll find in many markets that something similar happens.

Now, becoming directly accredited means, as Mouhamet says, you have a direct relationship with ICANN, you have possibly more skin in the game when it comes to discussions around the policies and

contracts and all of that. But I think we have to be quite careful how we approach this.

Now, if you talk to some of the registrars that I know in various parts of the world and outside the U.S. and Europe, they are not as gung-ho about there being more and more competition, because in some respects that's what if you make it easier, you have more competition.

Now, that doesn't mean you can't have more competition. But how do you do that? How do you say to a company, well, look, you went through hell and high water to become the first registrar in Morocco. And I'm just channeling Hamza, who isn't here today. And Hamza would be, has said to me more than once I went through all this to become the first registrar in Morocco. It would be great if certain things were improved. But I don't particularly want you to create 25 competitors. That's not particularly helpful. I think Rubens was putting in the chat there's certain other things that you need to be careful with.

And also, when you guys and others are looking at what you would like us all to do to improve on security and the stability, it does have come with negative connotations. Like the 24-7 contact for a small company is not easy. It's not easy for the big companies, not because you can't get a 24-7 contact, but trying to get a 24-7 contact that can actually make certain decisions. That is not simple. And it's not, and it's just kind of saying, oh, it's a cost of doing business.

Well, that's fine. But you do really want a situation where the only registrars are GoDaddy, Namecheap, TuCows, and maybe two or three other players, and there's nobody else in the ecosystem. That's probably not very healthy. So, I think things like with the registrar accreditation process, now look at how it is framed, how the questions are asked.

When we went through the process back in 2000, and we started in 2007 until 2009 to actually work out how to navigate it, it was like a lot of it was down to the wording, because it refers to very American concepts. It doesn't say you need to be able to do X, Y, and Z. It says you need to have this specific thing. That specific thing might not exist outside the U.S. It might not exist in anywhere in Europe, and it definitely doesn't exist in other parts of the world. But I mean, can you prove that you are a viable business and you're not going to go belly up?

That's not what's being asked. Like, why aren't they looking at things like, are you an existing registrar for your local ccTLD? Have you got a proven track record of that? I mean, these are kind of things that might make more sense to be looking at, because ultimately what you want is you want a healthy ecosystem, you want registrars who are capable of serving that, and there is value. Like, I know that my clients do not want to talk to people with non-Irish accents. It's a fact. It's a fact.

So, when some of the registries come to us and go, hey, here's a video you can use to market, we're kind of going, lads, that's lovely,

but they're speaking with a Texas accent or something. My registrant down in West Clare, he's going to look at that and go, ah, more bloody American stuff. Whereas you get somebody, like if you spot by our booth up above, you listen to, there's one of the guys there from .ie, he's got a thick Cork accent and that's what we want to hear, you know.

So, I think there's a lot of things that, but I think the thing I'd say is it has to be balanced and nuanced, because otherwise some people will take advantage and not in the best of ways, and also, it's not for ICANN to start meddling in kind of creating competition and all that. We have to be very careful.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Thanks, Michele. That feedback is very helpful, and good suggestions there, which we should take into consideration. Calvin?

CALVIN BROWNE

Yeah, I'll use the real world. Just talking about some of my experiences in the project that I was involved in on the .Africa side, because we ran into some interesting hurdles when we got .Africa delegated, and we looked around, or before we looked around and we noticed that there simply just wasn't an ecosystem, a registrar ecosystem in Africa at all. So, we very quickly realized that we'd have to go and do some vertical integration there, which meant

that we had to set up a registrar, ICANN accredited registrar, and that registrar is going, and it has a reseller model.

So, the idea is to cater for primarily the African market and to cater for the rest of the African market on a reseller basis, that's what we emphasize on, and that way, we can eventually move our .Africa into the African market, effectively trying to create the whole infrastructure. And, of course, when we were there, it made sense to throw on the other zones, the other TLDs, as well, for these people.

And I'm happy to say that it is really one of our faster-growing sections of the business, and I think, for me, the ultimate success will be when we have resellers who move off our platform because they are now big enough to go and integrate directly with ICANN. So, just some practical stuff that we've managed to do.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Thanks, Calvin. Reg?

REG LEVY

Thanks. Jonathan started this off with saying that we're assuming that there's some sort of a benefit to having a registrar in your local area, but my understanding of what Mouhamet's comments were is that there is that benefit. And Michele just underscored that his customers, while perhaps not being in an underserved area, want to do business with someone who's local to them.

And I would encourage the ALAC to keep this in mind when they review various policies that are being put forth regarding their support, because a lot of things that we're doing here are making it harder to do business. For the big companies, yes. Certain policies that are on the table right now are annoying to me. They are critical to small businesses.

They will put businesses out of business. I keep saying business, business, business. But if we want to say that we support underserved regions, we have to take that into account when we're making policies. How can a small registrar, and I'm going to pick on Michele's Ireland, deal with this particular policy, and can they deal with it in the same way that a large registrar in Canada can?

And obviously implementation will be different, but I just want ALAC to keep that in mind. I also want to say that the experience that Prudence brought to us is one of the main reasons that I continue to advocate for us to travel widely. I know that it costs a lot of money. It costs a lot of money to us. It costs a lot of money to ICANN.

I just want to shout out to the excellent staff who are supporting us. But, or rather and, I think that there's a proposal on the table to have one or two hubs, and I would encourage those hubs to be in the U.S. or in Europe because we don't need to go to Paris and Madrid and Dublin and London because that's pretty local.

All of those people can probably get to the same place, so maybe we just establish one. I tend to like this particular conference

center for that, but we need to keep moving. We need to go to Vietnam. I know that was just a GDS summit, whatever we call it these days.

We need to go to Kigali. We need to continue to travel, and I am devastated that we are not currently in Oman. I know that there are reasons that people did not feel safe going. And I fully accept and support that, but there is also value to those of us who do feel okay going to places that may not be friendly to all of us here at the table, to sitting at the table with our pride stickers and speaking and having other people see that this is an option.

And so, again, I understand all of the reasons that we're not in Oman, but I really hope that we go there soon because there are people there who need to see us. There are people there who need to interact with us. And that statement is not specific to that location.

The other thing that I wanted to underscore is going back to ALAC support for various policies. There seems to be an undercurrent or a theme of attempting to put reseller registrars out of business because there's an additional step between us and the registrant, perhaps. And I'm not saying that that's coming from the ALAC, that's sort of a global ICANN thing.

But one of the things that my company does, and I'm sure that Folker would say this as well, is that we provide registrar services for small businesses that cannot yet be registrars and help support them toward the goal of being registrars. So, we do compliance for

them, and then start to teach them how they can do it themselves. We also support the back end when they don't necessarily have the technology to.

So, there is value in a diversity of location of businesses. There is value to a diversity of type of business. And I would caution us all to make sure that we keep that in mind when we're looking at the policies and deciding whether or not to support or not support a particular policy that's on the table.

Also, I just want to say that when I talk to somebody in customer service, I also always want to hear an Irish accent.

OWEN SMIGIELSKI

Agreed, I think we've got a new industry, Irish technical support or customer support service there. So, Michele, you can enter into that. But I just want to, there's a question in the chat, wondering about if we increase the size of the number of registrars and how many out there, it would make the process easier.

I'm not saying necessarily make it easier, we just want to not have the financial barrier there. You still need to show that you've got the technical resources, you've got the know-how, you've got the ability, you've got the staff, you've got the expertise in order to do that. But you want to know, how can we make sure that all registrars have good business practices? Are there powerful processes in place to prune the registrar ecosystem of unhealthy actors?

For those who may not know, even though I'm a registrar now for seven years, I was at ICANN Contractual Compliance, and I can assure you we have quite a bit of resources there in terms of handling complaints, ICANN sends notices of breach and will terminate registrars that are not complying with complaints received.

There's also a registrar audit, there's one ongoing right now, which is targeted a little bit more with DNS Abuse. It's ongoing, but eventually it will cycle through and go through all registrars as well. At least that's my understanding, I know they've done that in the past and I would expect them to do that in the future.

So, yeah, the ICANN does have some significant things in place to do that. And so, I wouldn't be concerned. If there are any concerns about that, I would invite you to reach out to ICANN Contractual Compliance on that. Michele?

MICHELE NEYLON

Yeah, thanks so much. Michele, for the record. Well, first off, there are quite a lot of call centers in Ireland already, so don't worry, we have that covered. With respect to things that have been going on in the past and that have happened, the ICANN team have done a number of things over the past 10 or 15 years in various parts of the world.

We had a couple of workshops and things in Cairo and also in Paraguay. And I believe there have been other activities either on

the sides of other events, things like just even bringing people together who were existing registrars and actually talking to them a little bit sometimes wasn't a bad idea as well because not all of them are actively engaged.

Things like the language barriers are real. Even here in Europe, talking to French or Italian or Spanish registrar staff, quite a lot of them are not comfortable engaging. The language that is used in the contract might be wonderful for a contract lawyer, but for a normal human being just trying to actually run a business.

And bear in mind for most of us that are registrars, that's not my core business. That's not where I make money. I make money from selling things like hosting, dedicated servers, co-location, bandwidth, connectivity, fiber. Those are the kind of products and services where I make the bulk of my money. Because of course I am swimming in it. But the domain names of course are a part of it.

If you look in the chat as well, John McCormick, JMCC, who's been making some contributions there, he has been tracking the hosting markets both in Ireland and globally for the past 20 odd years, doing that based on things like the DNS records. In other words, where the domain names are actually pointing. In other words, are you seeing infrastructure popping up in a particular country? Or is it a case of it's all in one or two countries?

So, if you look back historically, you would have had in the early 2000s, the bulk of the hosting would have been in the U.S. And then

over time you saw the rise of companies and providers across the globe. And so, you saw a distribution, but you still have issues in certain parts of the world because the connectivity is incredibly expensive.

Have a look at Australia. It's an island. It's a very big island, but it's still an island. The cost per megabit is still significantly higher than it would be in other parts of the world. Here in Ireland, when I started out 20 odd years ago, the cost per megabit was around 1000 euro. It is now a rounding error that I don't even think about. I mean, I think it's down to cents. It's like, it's a tiny amount. Sure, don't worry. I still have huge bandwidth bills. But in other parts of the world, that is still an issue.

So, not all of the issues around getting people to engage and everything else can be fixed within the ICANN space. But there's no reason why we can't look at ways of engaging. But I think two points being made by multiple registrars here is that when you are asking for contractual amendments, understand if you ever want a 24-7 contact in Black Knight, that is essentially my mobile phone number, because I don't have a billion staff to manage.

JONATHAN ZUCK

That particular conversation is a broader one. And I guess we were trying to look at what ICANN could do if there were artificial barriers to entry. That was sort of the point of this session. I'm happy to have a lengthy session about rising DNS Abuse and what we're all

trying to do about it, et cetera. But I wasn't trying to go there in this session.

We're trying to just figure out if there were artificial barriers that ICANN might be able to address, or as you say, contractual language barriers, et cetera. It could be the case. We certainly don't have an agenda to get rid of resellers or anything like that.

We don't have an agenda to necessarily make it easier than it was for the original resellers, except that that's something that gets pushed back a lot generally, just because it was hard for somebody before doesn't mean it should always be hard. I mean, if it's unnecessarily so. So, again, having a contract with clear language might be a step that ICANN can take.

Nobody's talking about waving a magic wand and solving this problem entirely. And so, that becomes a Strawman argument in which we throw up our hands and say, well, it's nuanced, and so therefore we can't do anything. Let's figure out if there's two or three things we can do to actually improve the situation. And I think that's where Owen and I were coming from as we were trying to bring about this session. I hope that helps a little.

MICHELE NEYLON

Thanks, Jonathan. It's Michele again. That's an interesting way of framing it. I think one of the things that has happened over the years since we first got accredited is that ICANN has revised some of the language on the accreditation requirements thing. But it

could still be better. It could still be clearer. It could do with somebody saying, okay, well, if you're not an American corporate entity set up in whatever particular way, here are the things that we would accept instead.

This is what we're trying to achieve. Here are the ways you might be able to achieve this. And that's not making the bar higher or lower. That's simply saying, this is what we're aiming at. Like, you want companies that aren't going to go bang wallop next week and leave registrants high and dry.

What that looks like is going to depend massively. Yeah, but the thing is the 70,000 thing, for example, it's such, it is ridiculous. It's absolutely ridiculous. So, when Fadi got the board to remove the insurance thing, that 70,000 thing, it stuck there. And there's no real clear explanation as to why it's 70,000 and not 40,000, 10,000. It's a weird one.

PRUDENCE MALINKI

Hi, just to address that, Michaeli, I completely agree. The 70,000, and there's some really interesting chat to try and explain and talk about the alternatives to the 70,000. And I would really appreciate if someone from ICANN could actually come onto the mic and talk about it.

I know Andy and Howard are here, but it would be really great to talk about it so we can have it on the record and have this as being part of the dialogue and discussion today, because it's in the chat,

but not everyone is engaged in the chat. And one of the things that I just wanted to say is there may be a failure with the communication.

One of the consistent themes that everyone's talking about is language, language, language, and barriers of understanding the language. And so, even though there are these alternatives to this magical 70,000, people may not understand what those alternatives look like and how to achieve those alternatives. So, it will be really helpful. And thank you, Howard, for stepping up to the mic. If you could just talk a little bit more about that so we can kind of explore that a bit today, thanks.

HOWARD LI

Thank you, Prudence. This is Howard Li from ICANN, for the record. I'm on the GDD accounts and services team, also leading the registrar accreditation program. So, I think Andy already posed in the chat so where the 70K come from.

It's one of the earliest policy, ICANN policy we had. It was from 1999. I think it was like, the first one was 1998, the UDRP, and this is probably the second policy ICANN made. So, it's very long ago. It's a magic number. It never changed.

I suppose I was not around by the time, but this number was put in there to kind of, as a guideline to have registrar applicants that we can show the stable funding that they have that can run a stable registrar. We certainly don't want a registrar like apply today and

then they fail the next day, right? And then terminate with all the transition happen, right?

So, this is the guideline. So, we already had the things in there that with the matching detail, we already in practice for those bulk applications, right? They don't really, when they submit a hundred apps, they don't need to put like 70,000,000 to show, right?

And then also for the underserved region, for those who may do the business, registrar business with a much lower cost, we also taking it into consideration, like we have all those criteria lists out, when they submit it, they can just provide the reasonings, all this to us, we will review. And if it makes sense, right?

I mean, a place in Africa may doing a registrar business like at 110th or even one of 20 costs of doing in U.S, then they don't need to have that much money. So, we take all those into consideration in doing our review. So, we just have to look at it, all the application are making sense, right?

Your cost of your projection, say, oh, ICANN, I will do a million dumps in the next six months. And then you only show me you have like, what, \$40,000 in reserve? That doesn't make any business sense, right? So, all this in the application, we need to make sense in a way and review it holistically, right? Thank you.

PRUDENCE MALINKI

Thank you. That was incredibly helpful, Howard. And I know one of the things that has come through or come out of the feedback

from the session that we had was a genuine lack of understanding that this 70,000 isn't a hard number, it's flexible. And that there is this flexibility.

So, maybe one of the things that we could all work on or that maybe ICANN can look to work on is socializing that more, communicating that more outwardly with registrars in regions such as Rwanda who want to engage. And I know you guys have some really great work that you're doing now, right? You're doing a lot of great outreaches. But again, it would be really something to bear in mind because a lot of the registrars we spoke to, they saw that number and that they were not aware of the flexibility there.

HOWARD LI

Just a follow up on that, regarding registrar or applicant trainings and support, we've been updating the registrar application form regularly and actually it's quite a dramatic change from 20 years ago, 10 years ago, I would say. We all have all those policies that include in our application linking to the actual policy that they can read through the sessions because we have to make sure that they actually understand the policy or contract requirements that they come into, right? Because we need to be in compliant.

So, we actually provide all those links to the applicants in the application form. Also, we have published a lot of training materials on our website. And also, there's a ICANN Learn for

registrars that anyone can subscribe to it without charge, free of charge.

And also, we have some wonderful colleagues called GSE team and GE team and they actually work with a lot of local communities and governments that if there's any interest there, they will work with us, we will go there to provide the related trainings and all those for the local communities if there is any interest. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Thank you. I've got Justine Chew in the queue and then Reg.

JUSTINE CHEW

Thanks, this is Justine. To Michele's point, I think we support you 100% in terms of the fact that you mentioned some things are very American-centric and I will tell you for a fact that ALAC has been one of the strongest opponents about, hey, ICANN Org, you're not just dealing with Americans, you're dealing with people around the world. So, can you please stop being so American-centric and think about going outside of your bubble?

So, we have been very strong opponents, especially in the IRT. You hear me saying it, you hear Avri saying it and I think we need more people in various spaces saying the same things in order to catch ICANN Org's attention, right?

To Reg's point, yeah, absolutely we, and I think Jonathan said this as well, we're not in the business of putting registrars or registries or resellers out of business, right? We always say that whatever we

ask of registrars and registries, we always applaud the good ones that are doing good things, right?

And we want that as a standard benchmark that applies to all the not-so-good contracted parties so that it applies across the board and we have a minimum standard where we can expect people to do the right thing. So, we are always happy to work with anyone who sees that point of view, thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Thanks. Reg?

REG LEVY

I believe Mouhamet has been waiting for a while.

MOUHAMET DIOP

Thank you, thank you, Chair. I just want to raise two points because I know that we're just at the end of this session. The first one is, ICANN is a non-profit organization. All these fees in the 90s have been just set up based on how we're going to balance the budget and we know that from 90s to now, there have been so different things that have happened in the life of ICANN.

The auction comes, flows a lot of money in it and we know that since the beginning, all the budget was based on the 80 cents fee that we're going to have on all domain names registered. So, I think that in the past, we have example where ICANN were trying to push when small actors in underserved region was there.

We remember when we launched the first gTLD program, there was a \$1.8 million allocated to support new registration of New gTLD. So, I think that the times comes where we need to look at based on the financial statement of ICANN, we are a non-profit organization.

Anything that we put there for more than 20 years, that is seen as a barrier has to be removed in some ways because we all know that what is more important from a registrar perspective is the capacity building, the technical, the financial sounds, insurance.

Nobody discuss about all these things because they are mandatory, but anything that comes and prevent people from being really active, like these fees for the registration and also the fees to participate in the registrar consistency has to be reconsidered based on the evolution of ICANN. This is really the subject that I'm putting on the table. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Thank you. I think Reg, is next in the queue.

REG LEVY

Thank you. And I forget who brought this up, but somebody mentioned early on in the discussion that registrars for ccTLDs are restricted in their market. And so, once they become registrars for ccTLDs and start to become successful, they want to transition to become an ICANN accredited registrar. And that tends to not always work out because of the costs.

So, is there some way that we can look at, and sorry, Howard indicated that the \$70,000, which was instituted in 1998 and should probably be increased if we think that was the right number then, but should probably be decreased. Perhaps it can be a sign of stability if you look at how long they've already been a registrar, just not an ICANN registrar. Because a lot of ccTLDs have pretty restrictive requirements.

Some are on par with ICANN, some are wildly worse, better, depending on how you look at it. Some are not as great, but this is the kind of thing that you can look at. If the \$70,000 was supposed to be an indication of stability, which says to me, honestly, if they aren't a registrar yet, they've convinced a bank that they're going to be stable.

So, I'm not really certain what the point of the \$70,000 really is. But if you're looking for stability, a track record of stability in a market area seems to me to be reasonably reasonable. And I'm sorry, Howard, that I'm looking directly at you because you're across from me. You don't have to respond. It's just something that I wanted to make sure was on people's mind. Thank you.

HOWARD LI

Thank you, Reg. Although I don't have to respond, I just would like to express, actually, in our application form, we do ask whether the applicant's already accredited by any ccTLDs. That was like question 13 or something. So, and if they have, if they're already being reseller or having accredited by any other ccTLDs, they can

submit their financial reports for the past year that we can look at that. Okay, if it has a very stable cashflow coming in with that, we're fine with that. So, yeah, all right.

JONATHAN ZUCK

All right, thanks. I've got Edmon Chun.

EDMON CHUNG

Hi, Edmund here. So, I'm not sure if I heard Howard earlier correctly, but I just want to clarify. He alluded to UDRP as a first Consensus Policy and registrar accreditation next. Registrar accreditation is certainly not a consensus policy. It's managed entirely by ICANN staff and the RAA.

The registrar accreditation agreement is also a negotiation between ICANN and registrars. So, just want to clarify that. I did want to bring two particular points. One, as Calvin mentioned, I think local registrars are extremely important and it's not only just to promote the New gTLDs, but it's also registrants want to put their domain names in one under one account in a particular registrar.

So, local registrars can help do that as on top of supporting the more local and underserved region TLDs. So, this is one part. And I think the bigger point and relating back to all that is said is that ICANN has traditionally worked on these things, whether it's the ASP program or the accreditation program, as if supporting underserved regions is kind of good to have and do a lot of hand-

waving and cosmetic kind of work. But actually, I think that the issue is that ICANN as a global not-for-profit organization, as a not regulator, but a coordinator of this marketplace, has a role to play when there's certain market failure.

It is clear that there's a market failure because we can't get the registrars and registries from those underserved regions. So, what does that mean? Market intervention. Market intervention is actually a good thing for these kinds of things. And just hiding behind being completely market-driven or completely fair or equal treatment to all, won't solve the issue.

We need to lean more towards hand-holding as Jonathan started the session saying. And make ICANN staff understand that it's not just serving the U.S. or a free market. When we have a market failure, we need market intervention.

JONATHAN ZUCK

All right, Volker? Thanks, Edmon.

VOLKER GREIMANN

Thank you. Volker Greiman, CentrNIC. I think underserved regions is not maybe the right moniker. I think underrepresented entities is much more apt. Even for a lot of Western registrars, they started out as resellers. They might be registrars in certain TLDs, but not in others. A lot of registrars learned the ropes of being a registrar by being a reseller first. But they're not represented at ICANN. They have no voice other than in a personal capacity.

Maybe we should look at ways that we increase the voices of such parties that are on the road to being a registrar, that are progressing on that path to being a registrar, that are showing that they are processing registrations on behalf of their registrants for decades sometimes before they become a registrar on their own, that they have their own voice, their own way of speaking with an ICANN without just being some guy.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Yeah, we should wrap up. Thanks everyone, and thanks for being part of this conversation. We're just trying to get a conversation started here, and there'll be a lot of little efforts. I hope to improve the landscape for new entrants, whether it's registries or registrars, so that local folks can more likely hear their own Irish accent locally.

So, like everybody, I'm really looking forward to a whole bunch of new domains, going to .APE and other blockchain and things like that, but I think we try to remain focused on some of the outliers, both in the registrar and registry community, and we got to make sure that we're on top of it and trying to make that landscape better for them. Anything you want to finish with?

OWEN SPIEGELSKI

Thanks, Jonathan. I do appreciate, Owen Spiegelski, for the transcript. Just do want to thank you for this opportunity to work together on this and present it. I think it's some very exciting things

out there, and we want to kind of try and capture the initiative of the Next Round of new gTLDs and continue to move this forward.

So, I hope the ALAC continues to work on this, and I know, at least from the registrar side, we do plan to work on this as well, too. So, thank you to everybody who attended, especially our online participants. We appreciate you being involved as well, too. And thank you very much, everyone.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Thanks, Owen. And thanks for the interpreters and the transcribers and the staff. We really appreciate all your work. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]