ICANN Costa Rica Meeting
SSAC: actual projects with GNSO involvement - TRANSCRIPTION
Sunday 11th March 2012 at 09:00 local time

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Stephane Van Gelder: Good morning everyone.

Man: Good morning.

Stephane Van Gelder: I feel like a DJ. So we are about to start. We've got Patrick here; Chair of SSAC and we are about to start our day's worth of GNSO working sessions. Counselors if you're in the room please take your seats and we'll look to start in a couple of minutes. Thank you very much.

Okay, let's start with the day's session. I will ask the operator please, to start the recording and we're set.

So welcome everybody to this second day of our working weekend here in Costa Rica. My name is Stephane Van Gelder, I chair the GNSO. And we have here with us Patrick Falstrom, the SSAC Chair who is here to talk to us about SSAC's activities and ask maybe questions of us and we can ask question of Patrick.

So Patrick, I'll hand it over to you. Thanks.

Patrick Falstrom: Thank you very much and good morning everyone. I hope everyone got their coffee.

I will go through a little bit what we're doing in SSAC. And I also with me have both the support staff that we have in SSAC, (Bo Duly), and (Steve) and maybe some other people are here, and also my Vice Chair, (Jim) is here as well. So I'm traditional, but I hope that we can help you with whatever - answer whatever questions you have.

So we look at the - we start by looking at the publications that we have published; let's start with the most recent one. We issued a report on Dotless Domains; I will go through that a little bit later, which is number 53.

We also recently published an advisory on Delegational Single-Character Internationalized Domain and Top-Level Domains; number 52.

We also published late in 2011 report number 51, the Report on WHOIS Terminology and Structure, and those three are the most recent ones. The other ones are just repetitions since we met last.

The work plan for 2012 is that the working parties and working groups that we have at the moment is that we have a Membership Committee. That is the one that looks at the membership of SSAC.

And the Membership Committee is chaired by Jim Galvin, the Vice Chair. That is how we have divided the duties between us.

We have - we participate in the Internationalized Registration Data Working Group; IRD-WG. We participate also in the DSSA Working Group. And the work parties that we have internally is that we are currently running in pretty high speed is one which is continuing on the SAC-50 Dot command looking at the impact on DNS blocking. We're going a little bit deeper into that topic.

We also just because - discussions started a little bit more technically regarding Root Key Rollover for DNS for the root zone, we also have a work party looking at the various different kinds of methods and technologies and ways of doing that and we hope to be able to help the discussions in the community on how that should be done.

We this time have - we believe that we have established regular meetings with law enforcement agencies. We are for example this - at this ICANN meeting we're meeting on tomorrow - sorry, yes tomorrow. It is Sunday today, right?

Man: Yes.

Patrick Falstrom: Good, thank you.

Man: It depends which part of the world you're in.

Patrick Falstrom: It's only the first cup of coffee and yes, I'm in Costa Rica so it's tomorrow.

We're also, just like we're doing here, we are trying to go to as many - meet in as many groups as possible. And one of the things that I repeat to also you is that the more information we get on what kind of information you want from us the easier it is for us to work.

Stephane and I talk quite a lot about how to do privatization. For example, the work party that we are doing at the moment is to a large degree invented just because that is what we think is important.

The blocking is something that GAC has asked us to continue to work on. The Root Key Rollover is something that I am not, to some degree, and ITF asked us to work on. But I'm happy to work here, get input on our priorities also from you.

We are - we do have some parties that we have not started working on yet, because what we are - but on the other hand we identify them.

We have this pool of work parties that we are ready to launch. When we are finishing one work party we take sort of from this pile the one that seems to be the most important one at the moment.

And for the Board decision in 2011 is something that we're still - we don't see any reason to review the background for that decision. And basically one can say that single-character TLDs have an increased risk of confusability due to the lack of context that you otherwise get from the other characters in the TLD label itself.

It's also the case that for example we already - for the two-character IDN (unintelligible) where I think the communities thought that the policies we had for approving or not approving the TLDs based on confusability, all of us thought that the policies actually were fine.

And what we now see is that the review has denied; has said no to two applications for IDN said TLD is false track and the applicants do not agree on that decision which means that the instructions and the (unintelligible) the review was not as clear as we thought (unintelligible).

Based on that very fact, that disagreement is what is confusing and not, that will be even more complicated if it is the case that we have single-character TLDs.

That said we do recognize that single-character TLDs absolutely is needed in some languages and some scripts. So there are some very, very simple cases. There are also very, very - there are also very well-known black cases which absolutely should not be allowed.

The problem here is that there is a very wide span of a gray zone. And what we need to do is just to write down sort of rules and instructions that everyone understands and accepts on how to separate the crystal clear cases from the sort of bad cases or even the gray zone cases.

Because one of the things that SSAC of course is concerned over from a stability perspective is that if it is the case that a TLD is approved, it is of course the case that - and it is recognized that it leads to problems, there is no way you can revoke that and remove the TLD that is already delegated.

The second thing is that if it is the case that one TLD which using a character of a specific kind or which has specific properties, in that case that creates a precedence for even more TLDs which would want to use characters of the same kind.

And because of that, before approving a single-character TLD, we must agree that that character and others that share the same properties will be fine and will be fine forever.

Number 53 about Dotless Domains, this was a work party that we picked up ourselves. And the reason why we did it was that when we came closer in the fall of 2011 - calendar year 2011, we saw more and more people talking in marketing proposals and we started to get questions.

Many individuals in SSAC get questions on whether it would work to have a, for example, URL that just consists at all for example, a brand, HTP colon, slash, slash, brand, slash without any dots. Or to have an email address that is sort of Patrick at brand without any dots in the domain name.

And we decided that just because there are so many rumors, we decided that we'd better write a report here on the technical implications. And what we found was that in DNS it's absolutely no problems whatsoever to use just a top level domain in DNS.

The problem is that in the email protocol SMTP, a dot is mandated in domain names, okay. So it will not be possible to use a Dotless domain in a proper email address.

It is not the case that the SMP protocol is updated, etcetera, etcetera, which is of course possible.

The second thing which is more interesting is that we did an inventory of operating systems and Web browsers that is deployed today. And what we found is that there are very, very, very rare cases where a Dotless domain name is even reaching the DNS.

So the problem is not in DNS, the problem is the user link face applications and implementation operating systems. This of course means that this might change in the future; that people just like in the next version of whatever, Windows Version 11 or Macro S15 or whatever, it might work better or next version of Firefox or a combination thereof.

But today it is so - there are so many problems so that SSAC made a decision to even recommend ICANN to only - to recommend not using address records such as (unintelligible) and AMEX records in what is called the apex of the top level domain which means that for top level domains, they should not be these kinds of records in the DNS because it creates everything from confusion to real problems.

It's also the case that we are working as I said earlier, with the IRD Working Group where the final report is on the table. And here is the request that we would like to work a little bit jointly with the GNSO Council.

Jim, do you want to say a little bit more about this?

Jim Galvin: Thank you Patrick. Yes, presumably I believe you have gotten an update from Edmon about this particular working group, and I think that was supposed to happen yesterday. No; okay.

But it is a joint working group of GNSO with the Registry stakeholder group and Edmon Chung is the Co-Chair with myself of this working group.

And we have now produced a final work product which has been distributed, right (Juliette)? So that document has been sent out to you.

And up here we have here the specific recommendations that we have in that report that came out of the working group. So, recommending the development of a data model for domain name registration data, working jointly with you again to request a common issue report on translation and transliteration, and also working to create a proposal for a new data access protocol.

In essence this is about replacing WHOIS which I think we generally have agreement on in the community at-large that this would be a good thing going forward.

Going back for a moment to Item 2 there, just to sort of call that out, the translation and transliteration issue, we had a lot of discussions in the working group.

I think you've heard this report before, but I'll bring it up again here because I think it's kind of an important issue. There is the question about when someone registers a domain name, you know, what should they be required to enter and what should be there and what should the system then have?

So, you know, is there a single language? Should it be just U.S. ASCII which is really essentially the system that we have today or should people be allowed to use their own language, in particular and their own script?

Should there be some other common language and script that's used if not U.S. ASCII? And if you don't have a requirement for a particular language or script then where does the translation or transliteration occur? Is the registrant required to do it? Does the registrar do it? Does the registry do it?

Does the user of the access protocol who is in today's world, are they obligated to figure out how to do the translation or transliteration when they look at the data?

In the end in the working group we decided that we didn't really quite have the right mix of people in the room to give this particular point a full discussion and full airing of all the issues. And so we left it as a recommendation out of the group that we have to sit down and get the right set of people together; all of those various parties and talk about that issue. And I think that's a pretty significant issue so I wanted to call that one out special. Next slide.

So the next steps here of course are that you've seen the final report. SSAC has the final report. Each of our individual groups need to approve the report, review, and presumably approve it. But I mean whatever changes and recommendations that we need to revise the document, obviously the working group will take care of that.

SSAC, we would like to invite the GNSO in particular in large and of course the registry group here to work together to submit this document to the Board. So whatever review that you need to do and approval process that you need to go through, and SSAC will do it's.

And then we need to figure out who the right set of people are to get together and create a common proposal and submission to the Board for this document.

And then of course there's the follow-on work that the report itself recommends. Next slide. And I think that's it, right?

Patrick Falstrom: Yes.

Jim Galvin: Thank you. So questions?

Patrick Falstrom: So this was this - this was our full presentation and we can take questions on any of these topics and others.

Stephane Van Gelder: Yes, thanks a lot to you both, Jim and Patrick. Perhaps I can start off just on the Internationalized Registration Data Working Group which is a joint working group that we have in SSAC as you've just described.

I know you've been working very closely with the Registre stakeholder group on this anyway, so the possibility of you doing that exists; no problem at all.

The working group will send it's report to the GNSO Council, and at that point we can decide to as you suggested, jointly send it to the Board. It's something that we've done with other groups just so that you are aware that that is one way we can proceed to do that.

Are there any - Marilyn, Jeff?

Marilyn Cade: Thank you. And Stephane let me thank the - thank you for setting the session up with the SSAC.

I think that both Patrick and Jim know that the GNSO Counselors, but also the rest of the GNSO has representatives in the room. And so I'm speaking as the Chair of the BC with a question, not as a GNSO Counselor.

I want to start out by thanking the SSAC and the staff and whoever is responsible for the very well written and well laid out report which since many

of the BC members are not technical, it's very helpful to have a report that can be read by lay people as well as one that's so well documented. And let me thank you for that.

One thing I picked up and I just wanted to mention this here is I noted that you're working to help us as a community use proper terms for perhaps code words we have been using.

But I think it's really important not to refer to closing WHOIS or replacing WHOIS, but being careful to articulate that the audience of readers in the broader business user community would be very concerned if they didn't understand that you were actually proposing an evolutionary approach.

And if you read the report you get that, but Headline News sometimes doesn't translate. So if I could just ask that as a favor.

Then I will say about the substance and that is that within the BC we will have to do more significant work on this in order to file comments by the deadline and then to be able to file it by comments. Thank you.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thank you Marilyn. Jeff?

Jeff Neuman: I just spilled soda there; that's great. Hello, I just had a question on -- this is Jeff Neuman -- had a question on the future work item; I think it was the first one; said something about public interests.

I was just wondering if you could go in to what that means, just to explain to us what those three items were. There was a public interest domain. I think it was before that.

Patrick Falstrom: Actually this is a - this was a request from one SSAC member -- this doesn't look very good actually -- one SSAC member that came up with this. Exactly

what that person had been thinking about, I cannot really explain to you, but I'm happy to refer you and give you contact and talk with him.

Jeff Neuman: Thanks.

Stephane Van Gelder: Okay, Wendy and then we'll probably - and (Thomas) and then we'll bring it to a close.

Wendy Seltzer: Wendy Seltzer with another question on the possible future work. And I heard a fleeting mention of something on domain takedowns and I wondered whether you were thinking about that and in what way?

Patrick Falstrom: Yes, at the moment regarding domain name takedowns that is something that we to some degree wrote about already in the - SAC-50 on domain name blocking.

It is termed a sub-item in the work party, but it's currently ongoing on the continuous work about blocking where takedown is one specific way of sort of doing blocking or making a domain name not accessible.

So I think the next thing that you will see is this more specialized, more deeper report on domain name blocking. Whether that will result in yet another thing just specifically on takedowns is something that I don't really know.

That said we do have discussions on - generic discussions on for example what is the role of a registry in the overall ecosystem?

If you look at ISPs and IXPs and stuff, there is a discussion like you might know, specifically in discussions connected - which connect freedom of expression (unintelligible) Internet, on what parties are the classified as intermediaries and not.

And if it is the case that someone is an intermediary, what kind of requirements do we put on that one from a corporate social responsibility point of view, from a regulatory point of view, etcetera.

One of the issues that I have been working on personally -- this is not like take off my SSAC hat -- is to try to understand what the Internet community believe a registry is. And I'm working around interviewing registries and they have a very different view on that.

So I think that discussion will continue, but that is sort of an explanation why I as SSAC Chair am a little bit careful of having SSAC walking down specifically down that path regarding blocking.

So we are still working on the blocking issue more in general, thank you.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thank you very much. (Thomas)?

(Thomas): Patrick you mentioned that for the time being you will prohibit Dotless domains from being used and you even encouraged ICANN to use contact language to prevent that from happening.

At the same time you said that in the future one might revisit that and maybe allow it or the ask manufacturers or the SMP protocol is mandated accordingly.

And therefore my question is the contacts of the new registries will be for a term of ten years. So I think that one would need some language or flexibility in there to sort of get rid of this restriction when the time has come.

But have you thought of a threshold of OS manufacturers allowing for this or other, you know, technical thresholds where you could say okay, now the time has come so that we can change.

Patrick Falstrom: To answer the last question first; no we have not been doing that. And one of the reasons for that is that when we - as we see in the report, we reached out to Microsoft and we also - and anyways, Microsoft, Mozilla, and Google, and all three of them - and we also talked to others, but the three of them very explicitly also said it's perfectly okay to list them in the reports.

And no one that we've been talking about think that this will change within the near term. So this is something that is very, very - we talk about something very far in the future that might change.

So what we are saying is that we try to use the text so we still have the door open to be able to revisit this because it's still only sort of an implementation issue. But we don't see that change happening in the near time.

That said, when these kind of recommendations are changed into something which ends up being something that is going to be reflected in the contract or something, of course that is something where a discussion where SSAC participates, and I thank you for the comment.

Of course it must match what is in the contract with these kinds of suggestions or recommendations that we make. And we always have that discussion.

(Thomas): Thank you.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thank you very much. I'll just - no, no Jeff, we're bringing this to a close but before I do so I wanted to just read out a question we got online which is from (Ruben School).

At the GAC open meeting yesterday there were mentions of questions that have been about root zone scalability in the context of the new gTLD program.

Could SSAC or ICANN staff comment on what issues not onset by the SSAC group or on this they are seeing?

Patrick Falstrom: We - I think the shorter answer is that from an SSAC perspective we have the root scaling report that is pretty clear, and we have not gotten any questions or any input that have triggered us to revisit those findings. And there is nothing outside that - no discussions outside of that that we are working on now.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thanks. And another opportunity to say that online questions are welcome and questions from the room are welcome as well.

Jeff, did you have a closing comment?

Jeff Neuman: Well just that I believe the SSAC-51 to replace the WHOIS, I believe that's still out for comment.

I know the registries are putting together our comments and it should have it approved y this meeting, I think is our goal.

Stephane Van Gelder: Okay, thank you very much Patrick, Jim, and SSAC in general. And it's always good to be able to meet like this, so thanks for coming to see us.

And we'll have a very short recess and restart the recording for the next session which is the ongoing discussion and preparation for our meetings with the Board and the GAC today. Thank you very much.

END