BAHER ESMAT:	Updates from the Middle East. I work for ICANN. I'm the Regional VP for the Middle East, and today we're going to hear from our panel on what is going on with ICANN in the Middle East.
	Just a small housekeeping remark. We have interpretation service available in three languages: English, French, and Arabic. Make sure you have your interpretation kit, and if you want to make an intervention or ask a question, feel free to use the language of your preference. We're going to go around the panel quickly, just for them to introduce themselves.
HADIA EL MINIAWI:	I'm the manager of the Domain Name System Entrepreneurship Center.
WALID AL-SAQAF:	I'm here in my capacity as the Chair of the Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group. Thank you.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm from ICANN.

BAHER ESMAT: Okay, so our agenda today. We have three main agenda items to talk about. One is about the Middle East strategy in the coming three years. We're going to update you on where we are with this effort. The second item is about ICANN engagement efforts in the region, and the third item is about one of the key projects we started in the region almost 18 months ago, which is the DNS Entrepreneurship Center.

I'll just provide a quick background on the… If this ever works.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [inaudible]

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He's clicking [inaudible].

BAHER ESMAT: Oh, you're clicking. Okay, thank you. So I don't need to use this? Okay.

Alright, so back in February of this year, we started our review process for the regional strategy that started back in 2013 and

concluded in June this year. So, we started the review process back in February.

We had a webinar with community members to report on what has been done and get their views on what they see or observe in relation to progress made with that strategy. We continued the consultation at the ICANN meeting in Marrakech in March, and we put one specific question to the community on what the next steps should be – whether we should sort of develop a new strategy for the coming number of years or we should continue on what we've started back in 2013 and leave it for the staff to build on that.

The feedback we had was clearly to continue the practice of involving community members in developing the regional strategy and to start working on a new strategy for the coming years. And there was also suggestion to have a clear charter for the working group that is going to develop the strategy – defining its roles, responsibilities, work modalities and so forth.

So, a charter working group was put together in May, and they took around four weeks to complete their work. They developed a charter and based on that charter, a call for volunteers was out, I think, in early June – volunteers to take part in the strategy working group. And the group was actually formed maybe towards the end of June, and it has been in action since then.

Two weeks ago, the group completed the draft strategy document which was posted ten days ago, for public comments. You can see the link on the screen for more details on each of these steps. All the documents about each and every step – including the charter, the call for the working group, the draft documents – everything is available on the ICANN community wiki.

The region we're concerned with is the Middle East and Adjoining Countries, and this actually includes the 22 countries that are members of the League of Arab States plus four other countries: Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

So, for the sake of this work, we're referring to this region as Middle East and Adjoining Countries, and sometimes you would see another acronym introduced to ICANN: MEAC.

I think I'm going to turn it over now to Walid. Walid has been chairing the working group, and he's going to talk more to the details of its work. Thank you.

WALID AL-SAQAF:	Thank you. I'd like to note that this was really a group effort, bottom-up. We tried to make sure that we adhered to the standards of ICANN and ensuring everyone's participation as much as possible. And we've come a long way. This is rather an

interesting experience within the Middle East, and we'd like to encourage this process.

So, the baseline is that we have a mission statement that we have agreed on. This basically says that the aim is to basically "attract more active and engaged participants from the Middle East and Adjoining Countries region to contribute to ICANN's policy development processes, and to acquire leading roles within the ICANN community."

By leading roles, it means actively participating within meetings, mailing lists, working groups, various other possibilities. So, it's not necessarily attending a meeting.

And so, in order to have this mission accomplished, there need to be a number of objectives. These objectives need to be confined to three areas. These focus areas resemble the following: the first is to support a secure, stable, and resilient DNS infrastructure in the region. The second is to promote a healthy and competitive domain name market place within the region, of course. And the third is to clarify ICANN's roles in an evolving Internet ecosystem. This would happen through engagement with the community.

By referring to these areas, we can at least begin to mark or demark very clearly which of the activities and objectives can belong to which of these areas, and to help us organize our work. This is done by looking into the focus areas one by one.

As you can see – I'm not sure how clear this chart is, but I prefer that you look into the link that you can click on at the bottom of the graph. And there, you can actually begin to zoom in and look into the details more clearly.

For the first focus area, you'd find that it has three objectives: the first is to have the necessary technical expertise that contributes to building and maintaining a secure, stable, and resilient DNS infrastructure. And towards this objective, there needs to be a number of actions taken.

These are the implementations of the strategies, so when you look into it, you see that like some definitions of a strategy may not include these specific actions; but in this particular strategy, we would like to ensure that the implementation does flow into and point to the objectives.

The three main action points are to conduct trainings and workshops on DNS operations and security. The second is to train trainers from the region, and this is more of long-term, ambitious attempt to help people acquire the knowledge. The third is to make technical materials available to the community as needed.

And if you'll notice, these involve a number of stakeholders. Some of them are common; others may be involved as well. But the bottom line is that the implementation stage will require

some sort of interaction with these stakeholders. The second objective is to have the needed DNS knowledge and expertise within law enforcement agencies and CERTs.

This is rather unique in each area, so these are the main groups that this strategy tries to focus on. But then it has a number of actions that we've listed here which include "conduct contingency and coordination exercise to prepare CERTs for DNS-related threats."

Second is to conduct workshops for policymakers and law enforcement agencies. And the third is to provide technical advice to these two groups as needed.

The third objective within this focus area is to have some sort of stronger cooperation among ISPs and mobile operators, TLD registries, registrars, and academia to strengthen DNS security, stability, and resilience.

And towards this, we have three main areas of action. One of them is to conduct awareness programs to encourage DNSSEC deployment. The second is to increase the number of root server instances in the region, and the third is to support the taskforce on Arabic IDN.

I'd like to note here that these are not all starting from scratch. The three-year strategy that had been implemented for the last

three years has been quite productive in achieving the base towards these actions. What will happen is continue on and add more value to what has been achieved.

Moving on to the second focus area, we'll find that it's about domain name marketplace. The idea behind it is that if there is demand in the market, if there is activity in the domain name industry, then that will help us improve the overall quality and resilience and stability of the DNS.

So, it is a matter of demand and supply. And the marketplace is rather in its infancy, so to speak, and it's among the weakest in the world. So, what needs to be done is to encourage the market to grow, and by highlighting four objectives, we try to approach this.

The four objectives start with having the first – which is having broader and better advanced professional skills and expertise to further develop and grow the domain name marketplace. And this involves the work with the DNS Entrepreneurship Center that you will hear about later on.

And we added here "and other potential partners" because it's not monopolized by the center. Others who would like to [mark] and be included in this space are welcome to partner and collaborate, in fact, directly with ICANN, but also with the entrepreneurship center.

And they would organize workshops with the aim of developing expertise and know-hows in the various aspects of the domain marketplace. Then, they will be providing assistance for TLD registries and registrars with best practices and experiences from leading players in the market.

Then, you would have the building on the recommendations of the Middle East and Adjoining Countries DNS Study, which had been accomplished before. We'd like to use this material to engage with industry leaders and address the gaps that certainly exist.

The second objective is to have some stronger collaboration among stakeholders, from TLD registries and registrars and private sector government to grow the domain name marketplace by accomplishing – to accomplish this, we have a number of action plans that we have enlisted.

I'm beginning to realize it might take a while to list them all, but very briefly – supporting DNS Entrepreneurship Center; second, seek new initiatives and partnerships with interested parties; and the third, raising awareness across broader businesses and entrepreneurship communities of opportunities in this domain; the fourth is to organize media activities to highlight key developments in the global and regional domain marketplace.

The third objective is greater benefit by TLD registries, registrars, and other relevant groups in the region from the experiences and best practices of leading TLD registries and registrars.

This is a matter of sharing what others have done, so it involves actions of continuing support and evolve the Middle East and Turkey DNS forum, and explore means of increase impact. Support the DNS Entrepreneurship Center and other potential partners, as well, in bringing expertise in this particular area to improve business.

And third is to seek internship opportunities with leading TLD registries and registrars to support knowledge transfer.

The fourth is continuous informed and updated community on DNS-related activities and opportunities.

Here, we have two action points. One is raising awareness across broader business and entrepreneurship community opportunity in this marketplace. The second is organize media outreach activities to highlight key developments in the global and regional domain name marketplace.

This is required because the role of the media is crucial when addressing the knowledge gap and marketplace efficiency.

The third focus area is about the evolving Internet ecosystem, and this is where we begin to go into new domains that have

connections with other organizations and other activities that go, in some ways, beyond pure DNS technical and infrastructure issues.

The first thing that we'd like to focus on as an objective is to have an empowered stakeholders in the region to engage actively in ICANN supporting organizations and advisors' committees, and this is done through supporting ICANN At-Large structures through training and other resources.

As we know, we have a number of various At-Large structures that have emerged recently, so we need to utilize these. And then we have to develop engagement programs with academia, and that's a long-term commitment and we need to have civil society that's actively participating in activities relating to ICANN policy.

We need to promote ICANN's fellowship NextGen CROPP programs, and then support the creation of support hubs for ICANN meetings. The second objective is to increase or create higher levels of awareness of ICANN's mission and efforts to enhance accountability. This is through raising awareness on ICANN's new Bylaws and accountability mechanisms. This is particularly post the IANA transition that's been successful.

Then, enhance the participation and input in work related to different ICANN processes and working groups. The third is

engaging regional media and develop key messages to raise the profile on ICANN issues.

The third objective is to strengthen collaboration with Internet organizations in the region, and this is where we begin to involve other organizations. This is done through coordination with these organizations to work together and engage with the community, then participate in and support activities related to TLD registries and technical fora such as regional and national operator groups.

We also have the fourth objective, which is having a better understanding of the multi-stakeholder approaches in Internet governance, and that's done through promoting and supporting national and regional multi-stakeholder IGF fora initiatives, and that would include IGFs in the region, etc.

Then we have continuing organizing the annual Middle East and Adjoining Countries School of Internet Governance, and contribute to other similar activities. And finally, developing and sharing material with the broader community on ICANN's role in the IG ecosystem.

As you can tell, this has been done through… It appears I've listed them all directly to you, but I encourage you to look into the diagrams and begin understanding how they relate and how they point to the various objectives.

Having said that, if we move on, we'll hopefully have the strategy discussed and we've elicited comments. As you know, there is an open public comments period right now where participants within the group and others who are interested have and continue to provide and share feedback. What we plan to do is by the end of this month, we'll begin to solicit all this feedback and try to somewhat synchronize and merge various issues that have been discussed and brought to us so that we make sure that all things have been taken into account.

This will, again, happen within a bottom-up approach to ensure that everything is considered. And once that is done and over with, hopefully we'll be publishing the final strategy document on the 7th of December, and we will then share the draft implementation plan for the first year with the Strategy Working Group.

As you can tell, this is going to be a rather quick process since we have done most of the discussions before the open public comment period, and we have seen that there is synergy. There's active involvement by several participants, and I'd like to use this opportunity to thank all the members of the Strategy Working Group for their active participation.

There have been a few who have been exceptionally active. They know who they are, so I appreciate their activity. And we'd like to encourage this to continue as we go forward.

And based on the time available, I think we have an open discussion from this point onward. It looks like it's perfect timing, because it's 40 past. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Walid. And yes, we would like to make this session as interactive as possible, so we're going to have a Q&A session now. And then we'll go to the other two presentations, and then we'll have another Q&A session towards the end.

Now, for those who came late, just a quick note that we have interpretation in three different languages: English, French, and Arabic. So, feel free to speak the language of your choice. Any questions or comments?

John, go ahead.

JOHN LAPRISE: Thank you. I'd like to ask two things, one of which is, is Armenia considered within the region? Because if you go back to the slide on the map, Armenia is actually included in the map. That's just a [type aware] off to the side of Turkey.

The second thing is that I think the strategy is very good and very sound; however, I'm concerned that all of the strategy relies on at least tacit acceptance by the governments involved. Given the nature of governance in the region, if the governments aren't on board, you're going to be encountering a lot of resistance.

So, as a precursor to the strategy, I think it's incumbent to reach out on a bilateral basis and establish good relations with those governments, or at least to get them to get onboard to get buy in before proceeding further, if you're going to be successful. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, John. These points will actually be taken, as we have the minutes. Apparently, we understood that the approach would be more or less – at the beginning, at least – pragmatic in bringing in the subject matters through technical capacity building.

Personally – this is perhaps my own personal opinion here and not talking on behalf of the working group – but in order to gain the trust or the collaboration of various governmental agencies and partners, we'd need to assess or bring in the productive value that will come to them. And that comes from reaching out, for example, to law enforcement agencies.

And that's what we did through capacity building, training, supporting aspects of security, for example, which is a great issue of concern. We'd like to raise issues regarding collaboration, bringing in partnerships, introducing areas where the government itself is worried about – for example the aspect of how to ensure that the DNS system within these societies is resilient, is supported through infrastructure changes and through awareness.

So, we are not saying that our push is first to get their permission or to get their acceptance. It's just that we'd like to point to those agencies that these things are important for them. These things need to be addressed because they have value, economically speaking and in terms of politically speaking. Having a stable and secure DNS system is something that's positive for the country as a whole.

So, the argument is, in my opinion, this is helpful for the economy, for the region's productive development progress, and all sorts of positive output. So, once that is elated, there might be other questions that will evolve; for example, aspects of sovereignty, national interests, security interests, etc.

As time progresses, these will have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and if we cannot, I think, have a blanket assumption that all of them will reject, or will not accept what we are about

to do as ICANN, but I'd consider it on a somewhat positive outreaching effort to say our focus right now is about these very simple capacity outreach efforts.

[HADIA EL MINIAWI]: I just wanted to ask you if you can pinpoint the areas where you see that governments should be included, apart of course from the ones related to the law enforcement agencies. If we can go back to the slide, and maybe we can pinpoint these areas where you think that governments should be there. I can only see it within law enforcement agencies, but apart from that, I don't see why we do need government engagement or acceptance.

JOHN LAPRISE: I guess maybe I miscommunicated that. it's not that you need government's acceptance or direct input, but you need the actors that you're interacting with to feel like the government is not going to come down on them for interacting with you.

They have to feel safe in interacting with you; that the government is not going to be unhappy with that interaction, given the state of civil society in the region, or business, or the other sectors. If those sectors feel like the government is not going to come down on them like a t on of bricks, then they're

going to be happy to interact and it's going to be a very positive interaction.

However, if it's uncertain, if they just don't know, they might be hesitant. I guess that's what I'm trying to get at, to get rid of the uncertainty so that they feel safe. Then, they'll be more eager to interact.

BAHER ESMAT: John, yes, I hear what you're saying, and of course, engagement with governments at various levels is needed, not only for the point that you highlighted, but also for other activities that we undertake in the region. And maybe Fahd will shed more light on those activities.

The one thing I want to sort of underline is that when we talk about governments, we all understand that we're not talking about a single entity. Governments are several entities. They have different understandings of the issues and all this. And while we could involve with maybe two or three of them, there are others that…

Okay, just to be clear.

We have a question here. Can you come to the mic, please? And make sure you introduce yourself. Thank you.

LEONID TODOROV: I'm General Manager of APTLD. Thank you. That was quite an interesting run-up. I'm sorry I was late because I came from that APAC room, which is absolutely packed. There is not a single chair there.

That was my first question – what's wrong with us, with the region if we are just very few people in the room? And that's a good question to ask, and I think that the strategy, of course, addressed that.

My first question is – I don't quite get it. What's wrong with Armenia, John?

JOHN LAPRISE: There's nothing wrong with Armenia. I was just questioning whether or not it was included within the purview of MEAC.

LEONID TODOROV: Oh, okay. So, if I may answer quickly that question, because Armenia because the UN classification is North Asia – although they believe they belong to Europe anyway. That's just a quick comment.

My question was – I'm sorry to play a little bit stickler – so this mission statement which we can see on one of those slides, shall I take it, it's that core of the strategy? Because my understanding of the strategy – and I quickly checked that, looked it up in the dictionary – it's a "plan of action designed to achieve a long term or overall aim."

When I see this mission statement, I would say – I'm sorry, I'm not that fluent in English; it's not my native language – but it sounds to me a bit sectarian. It's like there is a sect and you need more like adepts of that and you want to bring them in, and that's your mission.

My understanding of ICANN's mission is to make the Internet prosper worldwide, and to do our utmost for that. So, that would be the mission – to establish that robust, sustainable, and self-sufficient Internet in the region. That, I would buy.as that ultimate objective.

From that – probably, that's my understanding – from that, I could go back to see which kinds of means – and many are there – and focus areas and activities one should undertake or take into consideration for their action, something like that. I'm sorry, I may be wrong.

EN

WALID AL-SAQAF: Thank you for your question. I'd like to point out that when we talk about contributing to ICANN's policy development processes, this already implies that it is for this global domain name system. Why? Because ICANN's own mission statement is implied.

So, if I say, "I'd like you to join my club," that means that the club's mission statement is in force because you're now part of it. That's promoting the establishment and the pursuing of this mission. So, the understanding here should be that because ICANN itself, as a body, has a very clear mission statement, what's needed now is that this region is not involved. It's not part of it; it's still weak in its establishment.

Then, once it becomes more and more involved in the process and has leading roles, then that in itself would result in a global, as well as regional, support of ICANN.

BAHER ESMAT: Something, and then we'll give…

And my reading of this is that this is basically an engagement strategy, and therefore, ultimately, what we're aiming at is to bring in more people from the region to become active participants and all this. How to do that? There are different areas, the focus areas, and all this. This is my understanding.

LEONID TODOROV: Thank you. Perhaps I should have spread that kind of disclaimer that I tried to look at that as if I were a government representative from the Middle East, although I have very limited knowledge of course of the region, I'm sorry.

And I would be cautious about this. I would be cautious as a government representative as we mentioned that, because that was not clear. Now with this explanation, with this wording, I would probably buy it.

But in this present form, I would be cautious, not least because as it was absolutely correctly pointed out, governments as a predominant force in the region are very conscious, cognizant – whatever – and cautious about such delicate issues as sovereignty, as cybersecurity, and all those organically grown entities that right now are at the core of the DNS business or ecosystem or even public stewardship, exercising that public stewardship functions are mostly government [agencies], technical arms of government [agencies].

So, we address a very specific audience in that regard. That's my understanding.

And next, I must confess that I did try my very humble outreach, and of course, it was really hard to sell that idea of "Please join

us," because at all times, I saw some kind of alienation and I saw some kind of "Thank you, but we would better try some individual path, although we're certainly compassionate with what you're doing."

That's another story, because when they address this huge region and so diverse, and sometimes separated into some sub-regions – again, this is my humble understanding; I don't have that clear picture – would it make sense to stratify it a little bit and then to somehow see…

We could see those focus areas, but wouldn't it be appropriate to fine- tune or customize those focus areas so as to make sure that we address particular needs or particular sub-areas, and in full understanding of specificity and peculiarities of that area? Because when you have it too general, then it's really hard to imagine whether one size fits all. That was my question. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: With regard to the focus areas, you don't have to provide this right now, but if there are specific suggestions on how to be more specific, would you mind providing input through the public comment period? We still have maybe a week or so. Would that be possible?

LEONID TODOROV: I'll do my best.

BAHER ESMAT: Okay.

WAFA DAHMANI: Is there a record? The session is being recorded? Okay.

Just to be simply and point issued by John about the engagement of the government and engagement itself, for me, why engage with the government?

Because we know that TLDs in this region are governed by policies made by government, and tough policies are hindering the evolution of domain names in this region.

To have a sustainable platform of DNS is not a problem for the region. Technical issues are not a problem for us. We can do it. Just go to the best practices and cooperate, and whatever it is that is the problem. The problem is how to make an industry about this DNS in this region. I think it's the main issue. That's why for me to teach – not the government, perhaps, but the agencies who are under the government and governing these TLDs – it's important in this strategy.

In terms of engagement, it's very important to reach the young people, the youth of this region and the academia. And you know, Baher, that we are doing now in some countries in the region. Because for me, there is a lack of knowledge about this ecosystem, ICANN, and this DNS platform.

That's why I think that I made the same point. I made this comment about the engagement of the government and the engagement at the academic level. That's to be simple on this point.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Wafa.

Hudhayfa.

HUDHAYFA BUSTANJI: I'm from Jordan. I would like to ask you about your strategy. Have you tried to contact with the MENA region governments in order to apply your strategy, or are you going to contact with them? Actually, I just talked with my colleague. We were wondering that there are no representation of MENA region government in GAC organization. So, what's your mission?

BAHER ESMAT: I'll take this, and maybe if Walid wants to…

So, regarding the GAC, out of the 26 countries covered in this strategy, I guess we have something like 20 of them members of the GAC. But of course, that does not address the issue because being a member of the GAC doesn't mean that you are actively participating in the GAC.

And we are cognizant of the fact that we need more engagement with the governments. We need to bring them to ICANN and to the GAC, and I hear from some of the comments now that maybe we need to have a specific – I'm not sure whether it's going to be a focus area or a goal or an action, I'm not sure but something specific towards the governments.

That's what I'm hearing, and I think we have some of the members of the working group around the table – we have the Chair – so maybe they can also talk to this.

WALID AL-SAQAF: Yes, indeed. It's important to ensure that governments are interactive and active, but in order to reach that step, we need to start implementation and show them that this is real work that we're doing, increase awareness, bring these people – governments, among other stakeholders – to the table, have them participate.

And as we go along, we would actually have the reason, increase the motivation for them to rise to the occasion and nominate and become active members in the GAC. So indeed, that's one of the implementation aspects that we'll begin to use.

HUDHAYFA BUSTANJI: Do you think the governments are aware of your implementation of your strategy, or they just – when you contact with them, they will not be able to understand anything about your strategy?

BAHER ESMAT: Again, it's the same point. When we say governments, what do we mean by governments? Government is usually composed of maybe 100 organizations, or maybe more. I'm not sure about this working group, but I'm sure there are government members on this working group.

We had several government members on the previous strategy working group, mostly from TRAs and ministries of communication. Now, being an individual volunteering to a working group at ICANN, does that mean that your agency, your government agency is aware of your participation and your work? Not necessarily.

So, I see the point about involving governments and engaging with governments, but I'm not sure whether, if we have several

individual governments, how well this strategy would address the point. I think it's more than that. This is – yeah

Fahd..

FAHD BATAYNEH: I just wanted to make one thing clear. Actually, these are actions. Once the strategy is final, we will be translating these actions into annual implementation plans. So, maybe each action would break down to several, maybe, action items, if you may call it – or maybe implementation items.

So, actually, all what you're saying – whether academic engagement or even more extensive government engagement or maybe more awareness from governments about the strategy – will actually fall in those action items.

So, we can look at this strategy, actually, as two layers. The first layer is this strategy document, and then the second layer is the implementation layer where we are actually implementing the findings of the strategy. Your comments will all be taken onboard when we actually develop the implementation plan.

Now, one other thing we may want to do, actually, once the strategy is out is that we will share it with our regional stakeholders and tell them, "Okay, we have a strategy in hand. How would you like us to help you?"

And, actually, we did this homework for this draft strategy. We actually circulated one on one e-mails to a large number of contacts within our region who are actually involved in ICANN in one form or another, whether governments, academia or civil society, and told them, "Okay, we have this draft strategy document. What would you like to see from us?"

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you. We have Ines and then Manal.

INES HFAIEDH: I'm very happy to be a member in this Middle East strategy, and I'm quite happy with the final recommendations and strategy. However, all this sounds good on paper, but it's true that we must work on when we're going to implement this.

As I've seen, being from this region, and I know the whole atmosphere. I am from Tunisia. It's freer, but the atmosphere in other countries – I can say for sure that this strategy will not be implemented unless we work with local NGOs on those particular countries.

Because by the end of the day, whenever we can write the best strategy ever, by the end of the day, the government is the one that implements it or not. And if we don't work with and we don't

build partnerships with local NGOs in those countries, we'll never, ever achieve those goals. Thank you very much.

MANAL ISMAIL: Thank you, Baher. And apologies for coming in late, but I heard the word GAC so I couldn't resist commenting on this. First, regarding governments, we already have 40-something members of the working group, and some of them come already from governments. And even others who do not come from the government can still share the output of the strategy with their governments.

We already have concrete outcomes from the first strategy that ended up with fruitful cooperation with the government, the DNS Entrepreneurship Center being one which is already a partnership that was an outcome from the first strategy.

Regarding the GAC again, as Baher mentioned, we may have many GAC members from the region – although not all of them, of course, are that engaged. But again, we try to do, every other year, a high level meeting and bring ministers and senior officials – to bring to their attention what's really going on at the GAC and within ICANN, in general, so that they can spare their delegation enough resources, enough time, authority to speak and take actions.

So, to the best possible, we're trying to outreach. It may take time, and again, it might not be as quick in each and every country, but I think we're on the right track at least. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Manal. Okay, we need to move on. Nasrat, can you hold your question? Okay, we'll have another Q&A session.

Okay, Fahd. Now it's your part.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Thank you, Baher. I'll be sharing some quick updates on some of our engagement activities within the region. I'll try to be as brief as possible. So, our fiscal year starts on July 1st; and since July 1st, we've been quite busy, actually, with a couple of initiatives.

One of those initiatives was the Middle East and Adjoining Countries School on Internet Governance, which took place in Beirut for five days, from 8th to 12th August. We were hosted by SMEX, which is a grass root NGO based in Lebanon.

The event took place at the American University of Beirut, and there were around 40 participants who kind of shrunk down to maybe 35 on the last day.

Of course, we did not work on this alone. We had our partners, the Internet Society and RIPE NCC, and we also had a steering

committee of six members who actually worked on developing the agenda, identifying hot topics, designing the roleplay, and even actually vetting and evaluating the applications we received.

So for this school, we actually received around 250 applications from outside the host country, and within the host country it was like 40 applications. This was really, by far, the biggest number of applications we received for such a school.

You can see a web link at the bottom there, and that's where we have actually displayed all information related to the school, whether the agenda or even the material that we used.

And of course, one of the interesting outcomes of this school is that we actually received a good number of applications for people to attend ICANN meetings through the fellowship programs, through the Next Generation program. And some of them have applied, actually, for the global IGF.

This is really the key objective of having such a school, in that we are trying to get people more involved in all these IGN/I* initiatives. We have a taskforce on Arabic script IDNs. It's a group of around 40 volunteers, hailing from more than 20 countries speaking more than 10 languages that use the Arabic script, such as the Arabic language, Urdu, Farsi, Pashtu, Dari – and a good number of African languages that use the Arabic script.

At the moment, this team is actually working on two topics. And I don't expect everyone to understand the technicalities of IDNs, but one is actually Label Generation Ruleset at the Domain Name Level, and the other topic is Universal Acceptance of Arabic Script IDNs.

The group had its fifth face-to-face meeting in Istanbul at the ICANN Istanbul hub office. They met for three days there, and they got a good amount of work done.

A call here to everybody: if you know of people who might be interested in Arabic Script IDN work, or even – you don't have to be a technical expert – If you have expertise in linguistics, we are really seeking people mainly from languages such as Farsi, Dari, Pashtu, or even many of the African languages that use the Arabic script.

If you know of anybody, you can just talk to me. You can drop me an e-mail. And there is a weblink at the bottom that shows actually the working space of this group.

We had a DNSSEC workshop in Ankara, so we teamed up with nic.tr, which is the ccTLD registry for .tr. We had several objectives, really, from this workshop. Number one, the Turkish community actually wanted to have such a workshop to raise awareness on DNSSEC in hopes that they can implement DNSSEC at the entire chain of the domain name system.

Another objective of this was really to train a local trainer. We had a lead trainer actually from ICANN, my colleague Rick Lamb, and he was actually assisted by Mr. Kadir Erdogan, who is the technical director at nic.tr.

And really, what we are working on is that we are trying to train the likes of Kadir and others in the region to actually become future trainers so if anybody wants some training on DNS operations and DNSSEC rather than coming to ICANN or any other entity, they can contact one of their local or regional trainers to provide this workshop.

Of course, on nic.tr, as a follow-up, they developed a website called DNSSEC.net.tr, and the objective of this website is to kind of dump as much information as possible and try to mobilize the local community there to implement DNSSEC on the entire DNS chain.

We had trainings for CERTSs and law enforcement agencies, so we did a one-week-long tour. And actually, one week here is that we started on a Sunday and we finished on a Friday. So, we headed to Dubai and we trained the CERT there, and of course, some of the officers from the law enforcement agencies there. Then we had to Doha in Qatar, and again, we trained the CERT and some of the law enforcement agency officers.

In Dubai, actually, the workshop attracted around 25 participants. In Doha, it was a larger group. Then we headed to Beirut, and there, we were actually asked to train some officers from the law enforcement agencies. And then, actually, academia were interested in this training.

So actually, this training is about DNS abuse and misuse. It teaches law enforcement agencies and CERTs how to deal with cases related to DNS. So if you have a domain name, for example, that is conducting malicious acts, how do you dig information about them, whom to contact, how to work around things.

And this is actually a one-day workshop, and this was a good opportunity for us to actually interact with CERTs and law enforcement agencies. And of course, we would like to thank the TRA in the United Arab Emirates for hosting this workshop in Dubai, and then the CRA in Qatar, again, which is the regulator for hosting it in Doha.

And in Beirut, actually, we joined forces with the Lebanese IT Association to conduct two workshops on two different days, at two different universities.

One of our latest initiatives is academic engagement, so we were blessed to actually find partners in Tunisia to deliver workshops. The concept here is that we partnered with a local research and

education network in Tunisia called CCK, where we intend to actually hold half to one-day workshops, once maybe every month or once every two month; and of course, the target audience here is academic students, or even academic faculty members if they are interested – to aware them more on real life stuff.

Like in Tunisia, when we went, it was really a group of computer science and engineers. So, rather than just staying limited to what they learn in textbooks, we gave them real life examples on DNS, on IPv4, on IPv6. And actually, another benefit here we had is that we utilized people from the local community to actually deliver this half-day session.

So, it was a half-day session in Tunisia on the 26th of October, and we would really like to extend our gratitude to Tijani Ben Jemaa, who's actually an ICANN community member – he's the Vice Chair of APRALO – as well as the Tunisian Internet for actually partnering with us on this workshop.

And the agenda, actually, for this workshop that took place in Tunisia was DNS, ICANN, and IPv4/IPv6. Of course, we look forward to having more of such academic engagements in Tunisia, and at the moment, we are actually seeking more partners in other countries to actually work with us on such an initiative.

So, if you are interested to have this initiative in your country, you can, again, talk to us and we'll be happy to explore opportunities with you. That's it from me.

HADIA EL MINIAWI: Can we have the next slide, please? Okay, the next one. Thank you.

So, I will speak quickly about the Domain Name System Entrepreneurship Center, then I'll present our three-year strategic pla. And I'll follow with our current activities.

The center is a partnership between ICANN and the National Telecom Regulatory Authority of Egypt in order to boost the domain name industry in the region. The MoA was signed during the ICANN 50 meeting in London, in June 2014.

Can we have the next slide, please?

In our new vision, we wanted to clearly state our ultimate goal, which is the growth of the domain name industry. And to this end, our vision reads, "To become a trusted body that works to grow the domain name industry in Africa and the Middle East."

We used the term "trusted" because no matter how good or beneficial our program is, if we don't have the trust of the

community that we serve, the program will fall far from the success that we seek.

Our mission is "to foster the evolution of a healthy domain name marketplace through understanding and addressing the needs and providing a platform for business development, knowledge, exchange, and collaboration.

And by a healthy market, I mean a growing market. We want to see a stable market with new players free from monopoly.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: [inaudible]

HADIA EL MINIAWI: I think we ran out of time, no? Okay.

So, our strategic plan. In June of 2016, DNSEC adopted its three-year strategic plan. The strategy took about three months to develop, and I would like to note here that our fiscal year starts in July.

In order to achieve our objectives, we asked ourselves: What does success look like? Looking at our vision and mission, the answer was as simple as to have a growing number of registrations. To achieve this, we know that we need to work on

several aspects of the ecosystem, and from here came our first and second objectives.

Our third objective relates to our role within Egypt, and our fourth objective mainly focuses on the center's sustainability, which is very important to us.

Next slide, please.

For the purposes of this presentation, I shall be only talking about our first and second objectives. To achieve our first objective, we shall work mainly on two tracks: capacity building and outreach.

To realize the first, which is capacity building, we shall continue with our professional workshops to registries, registrars, and people from the community; and we would like to add to this the employees of the Egyptian Universities Network [NOCs].

We will introduce online courses. And thirdly, we are adopting a new program which we call Youth Outreach & Capacity Building Program, and I'll be talking about that later.

Our second goal is about awareness. Through this goal, we want to raise the awareness of the Internet users about domain names. We want registrants to know that there are choices. We want to help in introducing new players to the market.

We intend to realize this through generic activities, participation in regional and local events, developing a social media plan, and some targeted programs – the first of which is our Youth Outreach & Capacity Building Program, which is a program that aims to build the skills and awareness of the students and university graduates.

The second is a private sector outreach program, which targets small companies that are not yet in the domain name business.

And the third is Empowering Women Online program. This program basically aims to bring businesswomen online.

Finally, our last track here is about partnerships. We simply cannot achieve all of this alone. In order to reach as much people as possible, we need to partner with industry players that share our goals.

Could we have the –? Yes, thank you.

To achieve our second objective, we have three main tracks. The first is to act as a hub for domain name industry related material. Second, to create a pool of experts. And third, to lend support and expertise.

To achieve the first goal, we are going to continue with making all our workshops' material available through our website.

Second, we shall try to know more information about the market and publish it. This will be achieved through market studies.

Through the second goal, we want to have a pool of engaged community experts; and by the community, I mean domain name industry community. This could be a CO of a successful registry, registrar, or the manager of a successful ccTLD.

We would like also to create a pool of local trainers from all across the region. We will create common interests mailing lists, and we will try to facilitate engagement and collaboration among registry operators.

Our third goal focuses on lending support and expertise to industry players. And here, we need to define the areas in which the center will be providing consultancy and prepare a list with the available consultants.

(Yeah. Thank you.)

Practically speaking, what are we doing to realize this strategic plan? First, building capacity – that's the first goal of the first objective. We will continue in conducting our professional workshops to registries and registrars.

Our most recent was a SWOT analysis, and a ccTLD marketing workshop for .ma in Rabat, Morocco. And this was the first French-speaking workshop.

Can we have the next slide, please? And the next, because I covered both. Thank you.

Second, we are introducing online courses. In cooperation with the Internet society, DNSEC will be offering an Introduction to Network Operations online course. The registration for this course is currently open through our website.

Next, please.

Also part of our capacity building is the Youth Outreach & Capacity Building Program, which, like I said, aims to build the skills of the students and fresh graduates. Our first course was conducted at the faculty of Computer and Information Science at the Ain Shams University.

This was also our first cooperation with IBM, where IBM had its workshop the week before us.

Could we have the next slide, please?

Raising awareness. We will try to achieve this through generic activates like newsletters.

We just published our first edition, and I believe that newsletters are also very useful in having the community and our alumni engaged.

Second, through, of course, the website. Currently, we have a space for ccTLD registries on our website. ccTLD operators or managers are provided with a username and a password where they can upload the files that they would like to share with the community. Thank you. Raising awareness, also, through participating in regional and local events.

The center participated in the 16th edition of the Global Symposium of Regulators of the ITU, and on the right, there's a picture of our booth there. We also participated in the Middle East DNS Forum, and obviously, ICANN meetings as well.

Again, raising awareness through targeted programs; and again, the Youth Outreach and Capacity Building Program targets that as well. We are implementing this program through an agreement with the UN and through a partnership with IBM.

Through our agreement with the Egyptian Universities Network, we will be able to conduct workshops to university students. These workshops are not necessarily only technical workshops, but are awareness workshops as well.

We announced our partnership with IBM on the 30th of October. Key speakers at the opening ceremony were Country General Manager of IBM, Acting President of NTRA, and, of course, Baher Esmat.

Okay. Partnership with IBM – I already covered that.

The second objective, our first goal, act as a hub for domain name industry-related information and material. Currently, we have all the material with regard to our workshops available through our website; and of course, we intend to have more material there.

Next, please.

Second, create a pool of experts. DNSEC started using local trainers in conducting workshops. Actually, the workshop that was conducted at the Ain Shams University and the one that was conducted at IBM – we used local trainers for both.

Looking ahead, we would like to continue having your support and trust. And we would like to continue realizing our three-year strategic plan, which has two very important objectives that I did not talk about yet, the most important of which I think is the center's sustainability.

So, I finish here. And thank you so much.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Hadia. And thank you, Fahd. Questions? Ali?

ALI ALMESHAL: Thank you, Hadia, for the presentation. Maybe I have two questions. First of all, based on what you are doing these activities, what is the approach? The countries that you have spoke about – like Tunisia, Egypt and the others – are they the ones who are approaching you to conduct these type of workshops and training, or based on certain criteria you approach and you propose that type of trainings?

HADIA EL MINIAWI: Okay, so it goes both ways. In some occasions, we were approached by – for example, the workshop that was conducted in Rabat, Morocco for .ma, they requested from us a ccTLD marketing workshop and we worked with ICANN to make it happen.

In other cases, we can approach people and say, "That's what we do, and if you want, we can help you with this or that." So, I think it goes both ways. First, we need to make people aware of what we do, and then they will approach us if they need our services, I guess.

ALI ALMESHAL: My second part of the question is, as you know, the next AGM of ICANN meeting is coming in Abu Dhabi, and putting the hat of

APRALO, we start working on sort of an outreach and capacity building program.

So, I want to know how we can cooperate with the Entrepreneur Center that we build the foundations for these things at least in the gulf area before the startup of the meeting coming in Abu Dhabi. We need to work out how we can cooperate in that part.

HADIA EL MINIAWI: Okay, sure. Maybe we can talk about that later.

BAHER ESMAT: Wafa.

WAFA DAHMANI: Yes. Thank you, Baher. I forgot to congrat Dr. Walid for the strategy and the outputs, since he's the Chairman of the working group on the Middle East Strategy.

I also want to thank you, Hadia, on the strategy you have set and you have presented. And I love my photo with you at the presentation.

And really, we are passionate to see the implementation of the strategy, and I hope we'll be helpful to you in the implementation of the strategy.

EN

Sorry, I'm in a hurry because I'm divided into two rooms – of African strategy and the Middle East strategy.

But I want to say that I can see many efforts deployed within this team. I feel one of your family. We work together on many issues and submit a strategy, and with the DNS Entrepreneurship Center. But I want to hear from the audience here. Please, tell this team how they can help you. They must hear from you. What are your problems? What are your needs? You can give your output to this team to help you.

I can see the efforts deployed, but I can't see what you want from this team. And we want to hear from the region how they can help you. Are you okay with the strategy? Can you see yourself in the strategy?

So, I finished that. I have to go.

HADIA EL MINIAWI: Thank you, Wafa.

NASRAT KHALID: I think my first point on the –

BAHER ESMAT: Can you introduce yourself?

NASRAT KHALID: I'm from Afghanistan. I think on the first point, I wanted to suggest that in our Middle East and Adjoining Countries strategy that we also – because the whole region, the way – and we are all aware has these special cases where in countries, the Internet goes down, it's cut and this and that. So a little bit of, maybe, research on these specific areas, if it could be conducted. Maybe Internet in Turkey was down and how much of an impact that had.

Then, you could sort of present this to people, but also when we have these meetings – high level meetings, somebody said – where you can bring in all these ministers and stuff, so you could also show it to them. Because I think our region has these really different cases which a lot of other regions don't have. So, that would be something to consider.

And on the Entrepreneurship Center, I didn't see a lot of Afghanistan there. That's probably because none of us have reached out to you, but we can surely work on something and we'll discuss that offline.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Yes, thank you, Nasrat. On your first question, of kind sharing information with governments on Internet shutdowns or

whatever, I'd like to point you to two things here. One, we have a Middle East and Adjoining Countries domain name study, and that study kind of studied the landscape of the domain name system in the region, And, of course, it had some recommendations on why this industry is still not developed to the level it should be.

And there were recommendations there with local content, infrastructure, Internet penetration, policies, etc. And of course, I'm not saying that the study is going to cover everything, but at least that gives you an overview of why the domain name industry in the region still hasn't reached the levels it should reach.

Number two, there are many studies out there that actually describe the effects of Internet shutdowns or Internet blockades or whatever. There was a recent study, actually, that provided costs of how much governments lost in terms of money from shutting down the Internet for whatever period they shut down, or even for filtering.

We, as ICANN, our mandate is really names, numbers, and protocol parameters. When it comes to other aspects, even if it touches upon us, it's really not our direct mandate. So, you can find these reports, actually, outside there.

And we as Middle East staff, we try to kind of point our stakeholders on our various regional mailing lists to some of these documents, just to show why it's important to have proper policies in hand and why it's really important to kind of think before you act on whatever act you want to take. I just wanted to make that comment, actually.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Fahd. Introduce yourself, please.

WALEED KHALIQI: I'm from Afghanistan. I just want to thank you for the strategy you have made so far. Just yesterday, I came to know that Afghanistan is also considered to be part of Middle East, because until now we were part of SARC, and we were considering that we were part of South Asian region. It is good to be part of two regions. At least we can get more help that we have not yet.

But about the concerns in the government. I do accept that there are some concerns about government. It's not important to directly or indirectly be in touch with government for our strategy, but somehow in some place, we have to reach them at least.

And plus, I have a question about – is this important that, for this strategy in each and every country, we should reach the ISOC

chapter of that country. Or it is also possible that if another association exists in that country which has more belief in that country, you can also use them to be part of your strategy and work with them.

And about the workshops, I would like to ask that in each objective, there was written that you have a workshop for each action. I would like to know that all these workshops, are you going to do it through webinars or you're sending trainers in the country. Or do you want to bring others from the country you want to bring them out there?

And about the papers, I was just reading today some paper about Afghanistan. It was issued from rand.org I think, which was saying Issues Affecting Internet Use in Afghanistan and Developing Countries in the Middle East," so I suggest my friends to read that as well.

Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Waleed. And let me also tell you that I come from a country that is in two regions – in Africa and the Middle East – so you're not the only one.

On your point about ISOC chapters, indeed ISOC chapters are one major stakeholder group that we work closely with as ICANN.

Many of them, actually – in this region at least – are also At-Large structures, so they have sort of two hats. And I think the strategy – and I'm sure Walid and others can talk to that better – but the strategy is also through the actions suggested in there. It's open for collaboration with all kinds of stakeholder groups from NGOs, businesses, and others.

And I guess you had a specific point on the workshop, so maybe someone on the panel can take that.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Okay, so before I go to the workshop thing, I just wanted to add one really quick thing. Actually, in terms of ICANN regions, ICANN actually has five regions. We have North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and Asia Pacific.

Baher and myself work on a team called the Global Stakeholder Engagement Team, and in this team, we actually broke down regions to more smaller regions so that we can better serve these regions. And our regions kind of have commonalities.

So, when we talk about the 22 Arab states in addition to Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, there are some commonalities – maybe in language, in script, in culture, in history. You name it. So, that is why this was our region. But if we look at ICANN

regions, Middle East actually comes – part of it in Asia Pacific and another part of it in Africa.

Now, on the workshops, actually in the action items – so workshops actually… Where it's applicable, workshops must happen face-to-face.

For example, when we talk about the DNSSEC workshop, it's better to actually have it physically because at the end of the day, the instructor might ask you to do some hands-on stuff, and if you are stuck somewhere, you need that instructor to actually help you figure out where you committed a mistake and how to fix it.

In many other instances, we can do it as webinars. For example, if you want to introduce your local community to ICANN and what it does, we can definitely do it remotely, and we have done it in the past. We have done it once in Afghanistan, and we have done it in many other places. So it really depends on the nature of the workshops. Some workshops must happen physically; some workshops can happen virtually. It can happen physically.

Just a quick addition to what my colleague Baher mentioned about ISOC chapters. Aactually, we have very good relations with

ISOC chapters in the region. We have a number of them as At-Large structures, and they're quite involved.

So, yes, there is that link between us and ISOC chapters when it comes to our work. In 2015, our regional school was actually hosted by the ISOC Tunisia chapter. And when we went to Morocco, and part of our engagement with the Moroccan community leading to the ICANN 55 meeting in Marrakech, we actually did seek the help of the ISOC chapter there.

So, yes, collaboration with ISOC chapters is available, and we do collaborate a lot with them. And they do help us in many instances on many things, actually. Thank you.

HADIA EL MINIAWI: Yes, I just wanted to respond to the two guys from Afghanistan to say that the center is happy to conduct workshops in your country. So, if you have something particular in mind, please get back to us. If not, you can leave us your contact information and maybe we can get back to you whenever it's possible to conduct a workshop. Thank you.

WALEED KHALIQI: Yes. In workshops, we have already been part of some workshops which were had. Fahd was out there. He has taken a couple of workshops on Internet Governance along with us. Plus,

we are also working on our own IGF and SIG, so we need your help on that.

From where I have come, from Afghanistan, there we have an association called National IT Professionals Association of Afghanistan. It has more than 1000 or 1500 members with it, and we are working very hard to do that.

So, I just hope that everyone will consider that association as well [with you,] and you will help us on that. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Waleed. Any further comments? Nadira?

NADIRA ALARAJ: I'm just kind of wanting to understand a little bit the relationship between the DNS Entrepreneur Center and the Middle Eastern strategy. Because both of them have strategy, probably there is intersection, or it's just one under the other?

BAHER ESMAT: Let me clarify that. The DNS Entrepreneurship Center is one project that ICANN is involved in in the Middle East. It's a partnership between ICANN and the national regulatory authority in Egypt. So this is one project that started 18 months ago and, still, it's ongoing.

They have their own strategy focusing primarily on DNS capacity building, so it's not linked in terms of – it's not a sub-strategy of the ICANN Middle East strategy. It's a separate strategy; however, the DNS center itself is one actor and one partner for ICANN, and also for the community in the region. I hope this answers your question.

Any further comments or questions? Okay, you're one.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Oh, were you first?

MARK SVANCAREK: I'm from Microsoft. I work on the Universal Acceptance Steering group. I was a little late, so I'm sorry. I don't think I saw anything related to EAI, which is E-mail Address Internationalization. I think, as you roll out the capacity for IDNs, it's inevitable that people will want to build e-mail addresses on them.

I'm just wondering, where would that fit into your overall strategy regarding awareness of the ability to do this, or gauging the interest in both government, corporate, educational, and just end-user cases? You know, people who would use Hotmail or Gmail.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Thank you for that question. Actually, we have a taskforce on Arabic script IDNs, and at the moment, they are working on two parallel tracks. One is LGR at the second level – or, at the domain name level. And the other is Universal Acceptance.

They're working on many issues actually related to universal acceptance – so from applications, accepting these IDNs, to E-mail Address Internationalization. They're working on a couple of things. This is a picture, actually, of the group when they met in Istanbul earlier in end of–

MARK SVANCAREK: Yes, I do know Sarmad.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Yes, exactly. So Sarmad is helping that team a lot with this work. Now, in the strategy itself, we did mention that we will keep supporting the taskforce on Arabic script IDNs – and as much as we will keep supporting the DNS Entrepreneurship Center.

Honestly speaking, we as staff support the taskforce. We don't influence the way they run things or what they want to work on, so they have some kind of a mandate that was actually developed by Sarmad before he joined ICANN. So, it was actually Sarmad's idea.

They're going through those items and they are looking at – their first task was finishing LGR at the domain name level, and they were the first generation panel to actually submit their GP document. And now they are working on these two initiatives.

And actually, my friend Abdul Minam is actually a member of that taskforce, and he's heavily involved actually in this E-mail Address Internationalization. So it's there, but it's with a taskforce and we're kind of leaving them to do that work.

BAHER ESMAT: May I just say something? I think what I also heard –

Is it Mike or Mark?

MARK SVANCAREK: Mark.

BAHER ESMAT: – Mark saying, yeah, the taskforce is there. It's doing whatever work it does, but then what I heard is also that we as ICANN/community need to do more awareness when it comes to use of IDNs in applications, the Universal Acceptance and so forth. So, I think it's the awareness part, with not only the technical community like this group, but also with industry, with

maybe governments, ccTLDs and other… So it's more about the awareness.

And I'm not sure, but I think that we have an IDN sort of action item in the draft strategy, so maybe we need to go back, sort of review this during the public comment period and see what else we can introduce there.

Mark, do you want to say something else?

MARK SVANCAREK: Yes, that's exactly right. I'd like to see more outreach and education on the topic about these capabilities that really will benefit people because I really believe that the label generation group is going to finish and it will be excellent, and it'll be really soon because they've been making great progress so far.

So, on the one hand, I would like – hopefully, as part of the strategy here – for there to be the outreach. But also, I'd like some research coming back in because I believe that there's latent demand for these features.

But as Microsoft, I'm having trouble getting real data on it, and I would like to use it to justify further expansion of engineering work. But it's hard to get good data; so, if this was a two-way communication back from the strategy group into the industry, we might be able to further accelerate things going forward.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Mark. On your second point about research, I'm happy to take it with you offline. It's a very important point.

I'm just conscious of time, and I realize that there's another session going to start in maybe one minute. So, I'm going to turn back to the panelists and allow them maybe 30 seconds if they want to say any final remarks.

HADIA EL MINIAWI: Okay, I just want to thank everyone here and encourage you to contact us if you have any new ideas or you want our help with regard to any of our activities. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you. I'm sorry, I missed one question. Go ahead, quickly please.

ZAINA DEGHLES: I'm from Palestine, NextGen program. I will speak in Arabic. I would like to ask a question. Even after this workshop, there is still a follow-up that has been taking place. What is the segment that is being targeted here, and what is the faction that's going to be targeted? What kind of faction that would be, and which

field? Would it be policy? In addition to that, would be a follow-up after the activities are over with? Thank you.

HADIA EL MINIAWI: That's one of the things that we are trying to do, and we have not been successful in doing so.

BAHER ESMAT: …on November 17th, so please make sure you submit your comments. Thank you very much for coming. Please join me in thanking our panelists and our interpreters. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]