
ICANN73 | Virtual Community Forum – GNSO: RySG GeoTLD Group Outreach: Engagement and Improvement
Monday, March 7, 2022 – 12:30 to 14:00 AST

DEVAN REED:

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With that, I will hand the floor over to Nacho Amadoz.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thank you very much, Devan. Thank you, everyone, for joining us. I'm Nacho Amadoz, I'm chair of the GeoTLD group. The name of the session is engagement and improvement within the ICANN community

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organization. And the purpose of the meeting really is to try and find ways to help the group and to help its members clarify the ideas that we may have to improve our approach to our engagement with ICANN in general, but mostly to continue the discussions that we've been having with ICANN staff and with stakeholders in the community as to how we can improve our relationships with ICANN at all levels. That includes for sure relationships with the ICANN staff and with the organization as a whole and with the other stakeholders in the community.

We have a very good relationship with the ICANN staff that we work with. Sometimes we think that we don't understand well enough how should we conduct our questions or our doubts, or our concerns and we think that we needed to find a way to put this all together in a room and to have an open discussion about it, open as in open to the public and to members and to the ICANN staff and to anyone who wants to join us but also open as to where it's going to take us because we really do not have a predefined set of topics and solutions that we think we need to cover.

That's the reason for this format. We don't have a presentation, we have a tentative agenda that we will try to cover. But we can just mix it up and jump from one topic to the other if that's what we find as appropriate for the audience.

We've had some preparatory meetings both internally within the group and with ICANN staff and with representatives from the community that have really been very helpful as to how to frame this discussion and

where should we put our focus and how important it is to frame the conversation in an appropriate manner.

We think that we are finding the appropriate tone to see how we can transform these exchanges that we've been having in the past to something that brings us to more easily understandable ways to find solutions based on the experiences that we've been having in the past and building upon them.

I would say that the overarching—to use an ICANN word—issue is clarity. And we need to get more time together with the ICANN staff, get more time together as a group and get more time together trying to get us more involved in the ICANN day to day, or weekly discussions about any topic as to gain more clarity about how we can approach these kind of issues that sometimes are a concern to us as a group. Sometimes they are because we are not knowledgeable enough about how to approach them. And sometimes, it's because we haven't found a way to find the way to fix it.

In this regard, whenever we tried to approach ICANN for this, we have to say that I can mention to specific people [inaudible], because they are registry liaisons to many of our members, have always been extremely helpful in getting us to understand how we need to proceed or getting us to get in a conversation with the appropriate department within ICANN.

And we understand that ICANN's complexity has increased throughout the years. And we understand that sometimes this requires some more time and a learning curve that is steeper than it was in the past, to

understand how to adapt procedures, how to get the group and specifically the members when they have a great concern to reach to reach ICANN with the information that is appropriate for that concrete issue to be resolved.

So that's what we are trying to do here, to learn how to do it better. Just to just to be clear from the beginning, we are not expecting ICANN to accommodate everything that we request or want. That is not something that we are aspiring to. The ideal outcome, we think, of this meeting would be to have more clarity about how to do follow ups and to track that progress so that we can report back to the group, or as individual registry operator understand better and be able to share among our peers how we are making that progress.

We have made quite some progress in some of these preparatory calls that we had with [inaudible]. Thank you for joining us too. We had some good discussions about where we were coming from and where we are today. And when you reflect on that, you see that there is an improvement that is very clear on how we received responses from the ICANN staff, from the cases that we create in the naming services portal. And that is very good. And we think we need to go deeper into that. So that's why we really thank you for being here today. And we think this is a good way to show that we are making that progress and that we are trying to make it together and that we see that we have your attention and your cooperation and we appreciate that.

If we go to the agenda, and we see sections two, three and four—and this is what I hope that we open the room for anyone, ICANN staff,

member of the group, just a participant that happens to be here, to just raise their hand and make comments and ask questions and help see how do we need to find the ways to find even better solutions.

We tried to make a distinction between what's our main objective here, which is section number two, which is improving our engagement with ICANN, understanding that the first point of contact is the registry liaison, and we know that we have to go through them, because that's the channel at our disposal. And that's good. But then we'd like to understand a bit more about how responsibilities and roles are distributed that. As we discussed in the past, ICANN is getting more complex. And we need to understand how to navigate that complexity.

And when we tried to see, okay, but we see some specific areas where we think some specific feedback might be needed, we came up with the distinction between the management of the cases in the naming services portal, which is our first non-human let me say that way, resource to just inform ICANN about whatever is going on. Another one that is very specific, that is Compliance, not because we've had—when I say we, please give me some leeway to talk on one hand about our great experiences and another one on the other one as a as a group, where we need to understand sometimes better what we need to expect from Compliance and what kind of feedback should we be providing to Compliance whenever we see something we don't understand.

We understand the role of Compliance, we understand that it's based on the SLAs and what's in our contracts. And sometimes we get a bit

lost as to what to expect when we get these alerts triggered and the notifications. And that's why this is a different section

And then we have sections five and six, which are of a different nature, but they are all connected somehow, which is how to improve our engagement with the community as a whole. Because we think that we should be increasing our engagement generally within ICANN, and that has an obvious solution, which is you put more time into that. Good. Yeah, we know that. But really to find where we have to focus on first.

And the second one is the GeoTLD meeting strategy that, yes, somehow gets affected by ICANN, but also that's a discussion that the group needs to have. I didn't know if, at this moment, there are any comments or questions. I see the chat room and I see the participants and I see a lot of ICANN staff people, and I really thank you for that. Russ has hand up. Go ahead, please.

RUSS WEINSTEIN:

Thanks, Nacho. Good to see everyone. Hi, this is Russ Weinstein from the ICANN accounting services team. We're your main interface from the human side, as you said, Nacho, which is a good distinction, right? You guys often work in our naming services portal for the transactions and you deal with the service delivery team. But when you have a question that you want to talk on the phone with someone about or chat on Skype or whatever, that's usually my team that you're working with, the account managers from my team. Andee Hill is here, [inaudible] account managers for you all, and you hopefully know Mert and Aysegul. Mert is the official liaison to this Geo group and does a

great job in keeping my team informed, me and the broader team within GDS, which is under Theresa Swinehart and also across functions.

And then Aysegul is obviously an account manager for many of you based in Europe and in the Middle East as well and Aysegul I think is your direct account manager [inaudible] you've worked with her quite a bit. Please do use these folks as resources to help you navigate the ICANN environment. Definitely understand it's complex and possibly getting more complex as we take on new projects and different things.

You also notice there are a bunch of—as you just pointed out, a bunch of ICANN staff, here. We have been having good conversations with you leading up to this meeting and we're excited to be here. We have members from the finance and planning teams and from the compliance team as well, as well as the GDS team.

And the Geos are always such an important part of the registry community from our perspective. They add a really cool niche, interesting diversity and vibrance to the discussion, interesting and powerful use cases, your registries that are making use of your TLDs and trying to find new and innovative ways to do that. So we're excited to be here, we want to help you be successful and really appreciate what you guys are doing and glad we're having this session.

But also, don't feel the need to wait for three to six months to pass for an ICANN meeting to happen. Mert can be at any meeting for the most part that you guys are having. And when you need more staff than that,

give him advance notice and he'll corral us and get us there as well. We're here to listen and help and chime in where we can.

NACHO AMADOZ:

And thank you very much, Russ, we really appreciate it. And we've tried to work on the tone for the meeting, because we understood early on in our internal meetings, but also in some dealings with the ICANN staff, that we should be careful about the way we would be phrasing this because it may sound as a list of complaints as a problem that we are having. And it's not the case, because anytime we've had interactions with the ICANN staff and when we look for answers, we get them.

We need to understand what we need to do in order to help you. And we also want to make you aware of the kind of issues that we think we need to improve. And that is that is all well and good. That is just something that shows that there is improvement. So that means that the feedback is being paid attention to and that we think that we haven't found a way to get this time together so that we can go through some of the topics.

By the way, Sue just let you know that this is just a regular Zoom room. So anyone that wants to speak can just unmute and go ahead, and I would really appreciate it. Look, when whenever we've had to run something by ICANN, we understand that we need to go to the registry liaison, and that we have you guys available. So when we go to Aysegul, in my case, and that is my particular case, I always know that things are going to be set in motion. And that's the first good sign that this is working.

There is a point though where depending on the complexity of the case, we lose a bit of visibility as to how we can keep track of what's going on, or who should be given the information to or when it happens, when can we say “I don't agree with the solution proposed because I think that some more flexibility is needed.” And flexibility doesn't mean doing something that is not foreseen in the procedures, but maybe requires some procedures to be adjusted to the situations in the real life.

And this is where we really need some more concrete and direct feedback from you as to how we can raise the flag and say this is not just a regular situation, because we know that we may need to twist something and to justify why this needs to happen. And we understand that we need to justify that because we are sometimes coming to ICANN saying we know this procedure is in place, or we know that we need to create a case. But we think that in this case, we may need some discussions. And we have those discussions. And we know that those discussions are available to us.

But then we need to have some more measure about how to track to follow up on those discussions. And this is where we get a bit lost. So we would like to know from you guys. And I know that is a generic appealed, and maybe too generic. But we would like to know from you guys some idea as to what can we expect when we set this thing in motion.

And I know it's very diverse, because it can be something that is related to the management of cases, something that is related to the financial

department. But maybe we can go into some specifics. Where do we see that fit? But we would like to know more about how do we adjust our expectations to what ICANN is going to be to be doing for us when we start this dialogue.

MARTIN SUTTON: Nacho, you may not see my hand up, but it's Martin Sutton, wondering if I could—

NACHO AMADOZ: Please just go ahead because I'm not seeing that. Maybe that's because I need to put the participants in my view. So now just go ahead Martin. I see you now.

MARTIN SUTTON: Thanks. It's more observations than anything, but just to sort of reflect on, as an association itself, the Brand Registry Group, like the Geos, helps a lot of members to do the navigation so that they don't need to get heavily wrapped into the ICANN world, which absorbs a lot of resource and time and effort as well as trying to build up that understanding and awareness.

So the associations I just want to suggest are a great vehicle for ICANN to use to try and get messages across, particularly if they're distinctive to certain groups or models of registry as we can see the geos. And I mean, we've enjoyed really good interactions with ICANN staff, certainly in the early days, we helped create some sort of

documentation to make it easier for people to understand what their obligations were from an operational perspective. So we worked closely on developing the operational guidebook—operations guide for registry operators, I think it was called.

Now, what strikes me is that listening to the conversation is there could be a number of different issues, questions that are surfacing within the Geo group. And they may be a mixture of items that are closely related to policy work, in which case I think there's a route through which would typically be with the Registries Stakeholder Group as an escalation path. But where they're more operationally focused, I wonder if there is a way to sort of segregate some of the issues, concerns and questions that you have into more operational related items that then can be cataloged and if you like, put on a list of items to work on so there is a mutual understanding with your contacts within ICANN as to what those issues are, who is responsible for following that up within ICANN or within the Geo group, and if there is some kind of escalation path that's suitable. So as I said, if it's more policy related, is that a path then to go through to the Registries Stakeholder Group and promote that through that channel? Similarly, is there something that on the ICANN support site at GDS, that could mirror that for more operational activities? So just some observations and perhaps some suggestions to explore. Thanks.

NACHO AMADOZ:

And I think they're spot on Martin, because we sometimes struggle as a group to try to find what is good for the members. We have members

that are very diverse. We have some that are around ICANN usually [inaudible] positions at ICANN that have known ICANN for a long time, and sometimes we have members that do not have a clue, and don't care, and then we need to—and I think that would be good, we need to try to make that effort internally as to make that distinction to make those categories so that we can come to the ICANN staff that have already expressed their willingness to engage in this kind of dialogue, as to help us make that distinction clearer, as kind of a guideline for the group and for us to make our homework and to make those categories because we see very clearly that when it comes to policy issues, this is something that may need to go through the slow and multi-stakeholder process that we have in place, which is great no matter the problems that they may have, but it's good. And then those issues that are more operational, where we can identify that some sort of increment in the feedback from ICANN. And the other way around, and the feedback from us to ICANN could help make this work faster. Russ, I see your hand.

RUSS WEINSTEIN:

Sure. Thanks again. And Martin, I liked what you had to say as well and agree on a lot of that, I think. So Aysegul put in the chat that operations handbook we worked on. It originally started as an effort with the Brand Registry Group but we quickly saw it was applicable to sort of all registry operators, especially those that don't interact with ICANN as frequently as some others. So please do check that out. It's a good resource.

I think in general, Nacho, you do raise some good points about sort of understanding what the progress or what the next steps are, how to keep track of it, and that sort of thing. So I think it can offer a couple of things. A good place to start, again, as an individual registry, your account manager, if it's as the group, use Mert or whoever the liaison may be in the future, but for now it's Mert, and we continue to—that's the plan, but just in case that ever changes. And then think about what the ask is. If it's clarifications on things, that can generally happen relatively quickly. If you're asking for us to change something about the contract about a policy, that sort of thing, please temper expectations. Those aren't speedy things that we can do.

Remember, especially for Geos, there's actually nothing particularly unique about your contracts, there's no special Geo provision like the brands have or that sort of thing. So any change asked of us or any exception asked of us has to be considered in the context of what precedent does it set? How might it have a negative consequence, unintended consequence? And how do we mitigate against that? Sort of what are the right channels?

So while I understand it can feel like a long time, we'll do better think about how we can maintain updates and that sort of thing. And again, the liaisons are good avenues for this. Help us understand the problem. That's another example of where the engagement managers, the account managers can help is, what is the source of the problem, are there other tools at our disposal other than a contract change, a waiver, a policy change, something of that effect that are really challenging things for us to do, other tools we have at our disposal.

And the better we understand what the problem is and sort of who's experiencing this problem or how widespread it is, the more we can offer in terms of solutioning and that sort of thing. So just want to sort of set expectations on that front.

We also have—for things going on with the ICANN community, we may help connect you to Chris Mondini and his team in the Global Stakeholder Engagement, which helps sort of coordinate things beyond the ICANN community, if you will, or across the ICANN community. That's another option we have to help facilitate dialogues for you and get things organized. So lots of resources are at your disposal. But generally, again, first touch point is your account manager or the group's account manager.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Yeah. Let me give you an example of something that was created out from a community effort. So that we are not focusing on something somebody, the staff did, that something that we tried to create with a purpose. And then we saw that it was not fitting that purpose so that we focus on something that is also maybe not specific to Geos, but that many Geos are part of, and that is the Specification 12 community change request procedure.

That's something that we started with Craig Schwartz and tried to find a way so that whenever there was any change in the community, that could be justified in front of ICANN with the appropriate background and documentation so that we could have a way to amend

Specification 12 without going through the whole registry amendment procedure.

But maybe we did not do it having every situation in mind. And maybe— and this is something that I was trying to get at before, which is the flexibility. And something that we miss that when we had one occasion to trigger the procedure. And that was for .Madrid, and I can talk about that because I managed the cases for them.

And there was an oversight in specification 12—sorry, let me rephrase that. Specification 12 reflected an oversight in the application. So the oversight was from the applicant itself, that it said that it would require in the future a local presence of an admin contact, right? That the registry operator saw that that was not a good idea, that that was not what the industry was turning to. But we thought that this doesn't affect policy, or community, because the admin contact is not the registrant, so it's not who's supposed to be evaluated as eligible to have a domain name.

And we had quite a hard time trying to navigate that process, maybe because of its flaws in its design. And that would be attributable to me and Craig among other people. But I'm just naming me because I'm here and I'm naming Craig, because you already know Craig, and Heather. And we tried to come up with every situation that might be good for ICANN to have in mind so as these procedures could not be triggered just by any change that [inaudible] to any registry operators or community registry operators.

But we found that it was not well adjusted for that concrete situation. And it was hard for us to understand how do we get ICANN to understand that the government of the Madrid region is not going to commission a study from a third party to let them know what they need to do with our own TLD because they are the public authority, and they just want to change a very, very minor thing affecting the admin contract so they don't want to change eligibility.

This is the kind of situations where we understand that we have created a vehicle for us to work better together, but that we need to put some more flexibility as to how to address the situations that may fit into that. And I think that is a good example because that is something that comes from the community. Staff help put it into form and to see how this could be created and be created as a procedure. But then we need to adapt to the situations the procedure needed to be used, because that concrete piece of language was in Specification 12 but this was not something that affected eligibility.

So how can we work in these situations so that we address that bad outcome of what we did when we designed the procedure? This is something that would really be helpful for us because, as you know, we are not so different from a regular registry operator. But we have some specificities that makes us sometimes be a bit different as to what we expect from ICANN, public authorities, the small focus on a community that makes it different than from an all global, all generic English term TLD.

RUSS WEINSTEIN:

Yeah, thanks, Nacho. And that's a good example of where that process that we developed together with the registries and particularly community registry operators, with yourself and Craig Schwartz were involved in that to help evolve the community specification in [inaudible] TLDs' contracts. So we developed a process together with you all where we tried to identify sort of what's changing, why the proposals to change, why it's good for the community overall, and that sort of thing, so that ICANN can understand that all in one place, it's available for the community as a whole to understand, and then ICANN be able to go execute those changes.

So you're right. We've used those processes very few times so far since the advent of that. So I think we're all still learning a bit of how best to apply it and how quickly we can move those things along. And we did try and build in good time periods to set expectations around how quick that can happen, and that sort of thing.

Yeah, I don't think the intention was to have to make a government like the Madrid government have to do a study or something. I think there's—sounds like something got mixed up there in terms of a requirement versus a question about, did you do this or have you considered this, that sort of thing, similar to RSEPs for those that are familiar with that. There's a question about community consultation. There's not a graded answer on that of, oh, if you did a public comment, you get three points and if you did this, you get this point and that sort of thing.

So I think those are just to help us understand, have you already socialized this with your community or with your participants, and that sort of thing. And to make that available to the public as well so they understand that this isn't a change being done in the cloak of darkness or that sort of thing as we try and do everything in that open and transparent manner. If there's suggestions for improvement, I'm happy to hear them.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Yeah, let me take you on that, because we had an excellent meeting this morning, just to try to help ourselves get something today that might guide us forward. And when it came to analyzing these kind of situations and seeing where we can focus on making them work better, I think that we identified several areas where we think that we need to work together to put some guidelines that help us, help you or that help you help us get them to better [inaudible].

We may have gone through some of them, but let me just go briefly through them. The first one is how to improve through the feedback that we provide to you. And this session is, I'm afraid, is going to be you and me talking for 90 minutes, but I think it's getting at something and it's been really useful as to raise the concerns and identify them so that we can make them actionable. And that is good. That is just excellent. And that is something that we may have not seen the appropriate way to drive them to you in the past. So that is something good. Flexibility as we said, or as I said, we understand that we have to follow the procedures, but we have to make you understand that sometimes we

need to be a bit more flex analyzing the situation. And in this regard, the response times for these kinds of situations, that's something that it would be good to have some guidelines as to when to say, "I need someone that I've discussed this with in the past to come to this case, because then otherwise, I know it's going to take longer." And that also talks about some simplification in some procedures, or at least simplify our understanding so that we know what things can be done at the main support staff levels and what things need to be escalated, be that because they are escalated internally or be that because it provides us a tool as to know how to get it to a higher level when it needs to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner.

I think that set of areas really help us see the exchange with ICANN as bilateral relationship where we understand what you do and we try to make it work. Sometimes just an internal question of the registry operator. But in some cases, as you know, people working at the backend provider also provides this kind of service for the registry operator, and we kind of translate ICANN-ese into the rest of the world language. And it helps us a lot so that we work on how to identify how to work better on those areas, and to have some set of clear guidelines—and my apology if these are already set in the handbook, but I'm afraid I missed that and I have to look at that. But that may help us get people the feeling that yeah, this is a relationship where when we talk, we are being listened to so that when we are being taught, we really need to listen and to understand why this needs to be this way and why this has to happen that way.

So we would come back to you guys with this kind of cloud of concepts that we need to work together from this meeting onwards, so that we can come up with something, if that's something that you think it's appropriate, and that we can do together.

RUSS WEINSTEIN: Okay. Yeah, thanks, Nacho. That'll be helpful. And on this particular procedure, I do think there's timelines in the procedure itself that hopefully help between that and the how-to guide we developed specifically for this procedure that can help set expectations. But certainly always open to hearing suggestions for improvement, and especially when it comes to expectation setting because much easier to change on that front than to change the procedures and things themselves.

NACHO AMADOZ: Yes, indeed. Thank you, Russ. Martin. Go ahead.

MARTIN SUTTON: Nacho, just trying to give you a break.

NACHO AMADOZ: Excellent, thank you.

MARTIN SUTTON: Just as a thought and building on what you were saying there is that there's perhaps one example you've been talking about. But I'm not

clear on what the GEO Group has on its plate at the moment. But if you create a framework which tries to put particular issues into buckets, then that might help you to build that up early on. So if you've got a list of items that you're currently dealing with, which bucket do they fall into? Is it more contract related? Were there specifics in the RA that you need to try and address?

And I think, as Russ has kindly mentioned there, these are going to typically be more weighty and long-term processes to deal with. And perhaps those can be—the expectations managed carefully in terms of timeframes so that your members are fully aware and can manage those expectations clearly.

And then if there's more operational responses and understandings to try and tease out with other issues, then that perhaps goes into a different bucket, which could be more timely and sort of work with the ICANN team to put suggested time frames down for addressing or at least doing the next stage, which might well be about clarity and understanding of what the issues are before any further steps are taken. So just as a thought there, I'm hearing certain issues, but you probably got a list of them that need to be compartmentalized and then can be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Thanks, Nacho.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thank you, Martin. You are helping us understand how to get this with a better light. And the discussion we had with you and some the previous week help us understand how to represent the interest of the Geo. That is something that we have also been dealing internally within

the [ExCom]. And that is, how do we do that without overstepping without doing things that the ExCom of the Geos is not supposed to be doing, that every Geo or every registry operator, or whoever does that for them is doing that, and therefore, we are not doing that and stepping into anyone's toes.

But we think we are in a position to try to come up with those compartmentalized issues where we see similarities and what we see trends, because they need—I think that it helps the ICANN staff understand what is our concern, when we do that group together, and maybe what we are missing, what we are not getting or maybe what we need to clarify to the members, because that is something that we also need help with sometimes.

We sometimes try to make a clear distinction between what we think we are not getting out of the naming services portal case, for whatever reason, we try to understand the reason and where the member has an issue with a policy. But that's not something that we can expect naming services portal case to resolve. And that's something that then we have to put more time into representing the view of that member in whatever public comment is applicable to that policy that he's complaining about or voicing out concerns.

So yeah, that really helps. Maybe that's also part of the reason why we separated compliance, because it's a very specific issue by itself. And this is something that we would like also to cover in this conversation, because my feeling is that it's going perfectly well because it's

becoming a conversation. And that's what we wanted to do have with you guys.

And sometimes Compliance scares the people because they are receiving alerts that are completely meaningful, because SLAs might be affected, but they don't understand what is going on. And we always get possibility for the second notice on the third notice so we know that we are not on the verge of a breakdown and the TLD taken over by ICANN, but I think that sometimes the language should be a little less compliance-y. Or, I mean, I'm not afraid by legal texts, because I'm a lawyer and I understand them. But they are legal texts saying to somebody respond in 15 days, or be advised.

And that sometimes is a bit too much to handle. There is a field where we can see that this two-part relationship that we need to enhance that feeling that this is something that is being built together. is where we are more Last as to what can we do to make it feel more that way? Understanding—and I'm seeing your hand, Russ—but understanding that when Compliance steps onto the scene, it is Compliance. So it needs to be firm. And it needs to be addressed. And it needs to be adjusted. And that's all well, but sometimes we need to understand more what's going on. Let me give you the word now, Russ, before I keep rambling.

RUSS WEINSTEIN:

Thanks, Nacho. And understand the point here. So as Martin says, Compliance can be scary, right? As I think you're alluding to. And some part of me says, yep, it should be a little bit scary. It should be the call

to action is part of the goal there is, something's not right here and let me look into it a little further. And that's where hopefully either the primary contact or the consultants that help sort of buffer some of this stuff, whether it's direct contact with ICANN or in the background, can help set expectations there. As Maxim says, it is a process, a compliance process. So I'm looking for an initial response, what's your experience? What are you seeing? What's the root cause? Hat sort of thing. Do you accept there's a problem? And then we'll work through it together.

On the SLA front, SLAs are something we do take really seriously and need the registries to take really seriously. You're operating a key part of internet infrastructure delegated to you by ICANN for those GeoTLDs, and what we're looking for is security and stability, and adherence to those SLA s.

So while we understand most registries outsource their technical infrastructure elsewhere, we want to make sure and notify the registry who's the contract holder of those instances where there's an outage or a blip or whatever it might be regarding the SLA. So it's an opportunity for you to get in touch with your registry service provider and find out what's going on and make sure everything's in order as well. So just a couple words there on compliance. JD from the compliance team is here today too.

Maybe another thing to add is something we've improved over the last several years is we brought the compliance process into the naming services portal so that now you have a consolidated place as a registry to go log in, you can see the cases that you're transacting with GDS on

one screen, you can look at all the things you might have open with Compliance and exactly where it is and how much time you have and that sort of thing so you don't get out of whack on that side. So that's a tool for you. You can correspond still through email, but it is a tool for you available to be able to log in and see all the cases in one place. Make use of that where you can.

NACHO AMADOZ:

That's actually very, very helpful. It may seem as a given, but getting CZDS, compliance, the regular cases, just within one single interface, it makes it very much easy for any of us to reference any of the situations that we need to address. Because when you try to prepare responses, or these kind of meetings, or hopefully, the meetings that we will be having now on based on this framework we are building, that it makes it much easier for us just to browse through one single portal and saves a lot of time. Jonathan, go ahead, please.

JONATHAN DENISON

Thank you. As you can see, I am indeed a very scary person. But no, I'm happy to be here and happy to talk with you all about this. And I think that between what you said, Nacho, and Russ, obviously there's—I think there's some good insight there as to how everything we've discussed prior is slightly different than when we get into the compliance part.

And usually when compliance is involved, it's not a great time to bring up concerns about policy or policy changes I should say. So I think

everything we discussed before is probably a really good idea. You know, obviously, we would always be involved if discussions come up regarding policy. But if there's an SLA issue, it's probably not a great time to start objecting to certain SLAs.

But when it comes down to it, we are truly happy to try and work through any issues that we have, or engage with contracting parties. And that's why we have this informal process is really to, if there is an issue, we are here to help explain. I know it's certainly not the first time we've heard questions about the way we phrase our notifications, and the type of tone we use. But like you said, Nacho, you have that insight. We're at this process. So based on the potential outcomes of these, we do have to kind of make sure we dot our i's and cross our T's, that kind of thing. And that's more or less what it is.

But engagement is super crucial whenever we're involved. And if there are questions, we're more than happy to ask those. So if you get something and you're confused, or you don't really understand necessarily how any kind of provision we cite is impacting the case, by all means, just reply. Any questions you have, we're happy to answer it. And the reality is we do want to work through any issues and make sure we're aligned so that we can move forward. And we do have of course, if there are questions, if you don't even have anything going on in the questions we can, we can always answer those. I'm sure you've seen it, but I'll put the email in there for the compliance department. You can always write there at any time and we can help explain. you also have your liaisons account managers, and they, from what I understand, what I've seen, they do a great job of handling any kind of general policy

questions, stuff like that, I'm sure they answer hundreds and hundreds that we don't see. And we're appreciative for that. But we can always answer those questions as well. But like I said, the main thing is really just engage. Don't be afraid to write back to us if there are questions, and we'll do our best to help understand.

NACHO AMADOZ:

And we've seen good examples of that explanations in previous cases. So as I said—and this is not personal because I understand that the compliance message needs to be firm, needs to be clear and needs to be to a certain point a bit scary. But it doesn't need to be a cease-and-desist letter. That is also something to be taken into account. And it doesn't look like that. I'm just using that example as something that lawyers might be used to. And they just really don't get worried and somebody that is not used to, might get it and get worried.

But my feeling here is that maybe because of the increase of cases or the amount of work or whatever it is, we had more direct connection to understanding some of the issues specifically connected with technical aspects in the past that we have now. Maybe that's just the amount of work is crazy and you need to be quicker with it, and I understand it, but in the past, I have the feeling that whenever we had something that our technicians didn't completely agree with, because they thought that that was being done correctly—I wouldn't like this to sound as if we are trying to say “No, but my interpretation of the SLA is different than yours.” No, no.

When they thought, Look, we've done this, and we have the logs to prove it and we need to understand why ICANN is saying this to us, when that happened in the past, I think that it was easier to get to an explanation than it is now. And that is something that is a bit of a concern, because then when you get an alert, and you treat that alert seriously—and we haven't had any compliance case to the worst outcome possible. So we really respond to that, and we treat them seriously. But sometimes we miss that direct explanation that we were saying that we are having now. So will have that in mind.

JONATHAN DENISON:

Yeah. The tech stuff is obviously kind of tricky, because what comes out of that is really a combination of multiple departments in ICANN. So we have our technical services team who basically runs those monitoring systems, and so their information feeds into us. And we're kind of like the vessel to pass along that information.

And we have had discussions before with service providers and the registry operators, if there are concerns about these types of SLA issues or notifications that they received, and it really just—obviously, majority of the time these things are resolved and then the compliance portion starts. And it's about kind of understanding what happened and what can be done to help prevent that in the future. Because, as Russ said, this is obviously an incredibly important issue contractually speaking. And I think if there are kind of observations from the service providers that seem to indicate that this issue was triggered improperly, we can raise that with us. It's going to be kind of a broader

discussion, because we'll pull in like technical services, probably, like, account managers, Russ's team, stuff like that, and we can have those discussions, but we would just need obviously, other people present to help kind of analyze and interpret. But there is that option there.

However, the SLA thing can lead to EBERP. So it's a tricky situation, right, it's not something you can easily kind of resolve in the moment if something's still occurring. So I totally understand that, but assuming if things resolve and we want to have discussions about any of the monitoring stuff like that, I'm sure ICANN would be happy to have those discussions. And those can be with the registry operator themselves and whomever they wish to kind of bring into the discussion.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Yeah, thank you. And as I said, whenever we've had these issues, we, we haven't had the feeling or the fear that ICANN would not listen to what we are responding because that has almost always—and I guess I have to say almost, because I have a couple of situations in mind where we might need to discuss further, but it's always the case that when we come back and reply to you and say, “Hey, we are looking for the cause of this, give us some more days,” Compliance has always been clear. We are good actors. We are not doing anything weird. That doesn't mean that we don't have to be subjected to the same standards. But you don't treat us as bad actors, which would be a bad situation. So that's good.

JONATHAN DENISON: Yeah, and to reiterate what Russ is saying here, he wrote, “Those discussions about how we measure & monitor the SLAs are best to do when we are not in the midst of a service disruption.” Which is very, very true. So you know, we can always have those to tell how it works and how we see it from our side.

And I'm glad you brought up the time thing. In many situations, depending on the circumstances of the issue at hand, if it seems like something where—typically most of our communications ask for like a five business day turnaround time, depends on the contractual obligations. But if there is more time needed to respond to certain things, assuming it's not like an emergency type situation, then you can always request extensions to some of our notices. And if you just provide a little explanation as to why you need it and ask for or tell us like a certain time frame you can get back to us, in general, we're willing to collaborate with those, because to us, at least it shows that you're engaged and you're doing something. So we try to be pretty fair in that regard.

NACHO AMADOZ: That's true. And we have experienced that. And you always give us time. The one thing for me to raise here is that not everyone is based in the US. So maybe you have to not pay attention to every bank holiday in every country of the world. But sometimes when you communicate something, and it's a bit more difficult for us because we need a response from the registry operator and he's going to be off for two more days and the weekend, you're always reasonable. But just bear

that in mind sometimes because situations differ depending on the registry operator and where they are based.

JONATHAN DENISON: Totally. Thank you.

NACHO AMADOZ: We've been at it for one hour already. More than one hour. I don't know if anyone else in the group wants to say anything specific about what we are covering. My feeling is that we have gone through most of what we wanted to cover in those sections, specifically related to the interaction with the ICANN staff, because we have 22 minutes, and I'm always afraid we're going to be running short of content. That's just the opposite. And we're always running short in time.

And we should be getting into the [inaudible] and one of them is improving GeoTLD engagement with ICANN community. Before getting into that, we really thank you for being here, because we think that we are getting your attention. And that is something that is really helpful for us to start building from here.

What we are going to do, or what the ExCom of the group is trying to start doing from the end of the meeting forward is to come back to you with specifics and the kind of discussions that we would like to have with you as to how to improve our engagement with you guys. And it would be good for us—at least that's what we discussed this morning—to try to have some idea about how to track progress from ICANN meeting to ICANN meeting, because that's a period long enough so that

we don't need to be rushing anything but that gives us the idea that on that milestone, we will have some feedback and we will have done our homework.

That doesn't mean that we want to have these kinds of meeting in every ICANN meeting. It just means that for us mentally to have this ICANN meeting to ICANN meeting milestone—and hopefully when we come back to being face to face—is really helpful. And it's a period of time that is three four months that is long enough for us to work on things and long enough for you to come to us with feedback that is meaningful.

Anyone else wants to say anything, wants to raise any issue, wants to give a different impression? Let me go then to the next point, which is improving our relationships with the ICANN community. I said at the beginning, apart from the obvious thing, which is to commit more time, in this regard, Martin and [inaudible] have always been very helpful because they really want to get the Geos visible, and they are always nagging us to be providing some updates on where we are.

You can see that the attendance from Geos is not extraordinary in this meeting. And that is one of the challenges. And for that, it to be great to hear from you as to what can we do to get the members more engaged. We have some five, six very engaged members that represent diversity of TLDs, not only five or six. But we have others that really come and go without any clear pattern.

So in order to come back to you with more time and content, we need to get them to be more present, or at least to validate what we are doing as an ExCom. So if anyone has any thoughts on this, they would be

extremely welcome, because we don't know what else to do. Sam, I see your hand now. Go ahead, please.

SAM DEMETRIOU:

Yeah. Hi, Nacho. And hi, everyone. Thanks for having me here today. I'm glad I could be with you for this meeting. So I think these are some really great questions. And getting better member engagement across the entire Registries Stakeholder Group membership is like also something that I think about and have challenges with, especially when we're still not able to meet face to face.

So the very glib part of me wants to say how to get better engagement is like, let's start traveling again, let's see each other in person, I think that's gonna help. But kind of more into the day to day bread and butter, one of the challenges I think I face as the chair of the full stakeholder group is we have a meeting every two weeks, those meetings come up really fast, we sort of end up falling into just the same kind of routine updates over and over because we want to use the time that we do have people together to make sure we're not missing anything.

But that said, I think maybe one of the things, our respective ExComs, so like the ExCom of the Geo group and the ExCom of the full stakeholder group can do is have more regular touch points, to understand how those policy things that we are working on as a full stakeholder group, those policy items, or just other work initiatives going on at the full community level, how they impact the GeoTLDs, what interest they might have for your membership that is a unique

perspective that we might not be seeing when we're just trying to think across the whole universe of stakeholder group members.

Martin, I'm glad you're here too. I think it's also something we can be better about in making sure we're engaging with the brand TLD membership. So maybe it looks like one step. So I like your idea, Nacho, of tracking tangible progress between ICANN meetings.

Maybe like one step we can take between ICANN 73 and ICANN 74 is scheduling two or three—will look at the calendar and see what works—touch points for the ExCom of the full stakeholder group to meet with the Geos, also maybe to meet with the brands or other interest groups within the Registries Stakeholder Group and kind of dive into some of the issues to make sure that we're understanding where the interest points are. And that way, there's like a better bridge to engagement. So you can bring stuff back to the Geos, we can bring the Geo perspectives back into the full stakeholder group, just really keeping those lines of communication open.

NACHO AMADOZ:

That is just great. Sam, I think that we are very, very happy to do that. We have been discussing some similar idea. And I think that just fits perfectly well. Martin, you think so as well, right?

MARTIN SUTTON:

Absolutely. So yeah, I think that's great, Sam, and the thing that I just wanted to add on is that we kind of talk about issues a lot here whereas there's a lot of bloody good work that's been done to make things

successful. So your GeoTLDs, they just haven't happened. There's a heck of a lot of work that goes behind making these successful, making them different, making them innovative. So I think there's a lot to shout about. And WHAT we've done in the Brand Registry Group in the past is at least to try and engage with the community and show what is happening and show that this doesn't happen by accident, there is a lot of good activities that go on, there are a lot of challenges that you face along the way. And it's good for the community to be able to understand those rather than wait for issues to emerge during, say, policy development, where we may have diverging views within the Registries Stakeholder Group, because we have very different models.

Now, I think that helps in engagement with the community. It also could encourage other people into the GeoTLDs to not only to come in, but also to be active, because they can see the benefits, they can see what's happening and they want to probably start sharing their stories or questions with that group. So there's a whole different raft of things rather than trying to deal with issues within this space. There's also the point which I'm trying to make here, is showcase what has been done, illustrate some of the challenges, how they've been overcome, or which challenges still remain, and you're working on, because that shows the value in the GeoTLD group working on behalf of its members, it raises the profile within the community significantly. And I think that those might be suggestions you could explore at least going forward.

NACHO AMADOZ: Thanks, indeed thanks to you. I think that we are going to be showing to the membership the value by doing what you proposed. On one hand, having that more direct engagement with you guys. And thank you for the offers. The other one is to try to show that we are keeping up with what's going on with ICANN organization, with ICANN community, with ICANN whatever tag I need to put on it.

It is true that it is more challenging now than before to follow ICANN because it's less exciting. It's a bit more boring. And that makes it a bit more difficult. But hopefully we can change that. Really, thank you for being here and for giving us your feedback, because I think that we need to be doing that. And then some more engagement will come because they will see that we are present at that. Thank you very much. I see no hands. [inaudible]. You know, Russ, I find them exciting when we are on May 17, just seven days before all the client go crazy about GDPR.

RUSS WEINSTEIN: Yeah. That was an exciting time, Nacho. You're right. Probably the last time that was exciting.

NACHO AMADOZ: That was that was the GDD in Amsterdam, right?

RUSS WEINSTEIN: Vancouver, if I'm not mistaken.

NACHO AMADOZ: Could be. That was fine. We're not going to find ourselves in the same situation with DSA and DMA. But I'm sure we will find a way to find us in a tight spot.

RUSS WEINSTEIN: Exciting times ahead. I promise.

NACHO AMADOZ: The last section before the wrap up is the GeoTLD meeting strategy. And we have to say we are a bit lost about what can we expect from ICANN here. Before—and I don't know if that's before pandemic, if that's before before, that's before whatever—we had our general meetings within the ICANN schedule, and we used ICANN's rooms and facilities when they were face to face. And I think that at some point when we'd gone remote, we also did that. But now we cannot do that any longer. And we don't understand why. We don't understand what's the issue. With the amount of physical rooms that ICANN has in a regular meeting or the amount of virtual rooms that we could have which is infinite, why it is an issue for us to have the general annual meeting within an ICANN meeting and within the ICANN agenda? If I'm not wrong, we've been told that we cannot do that anymore. But I don't understand why. I really don't.

I really think that it shouldn't be detrimental to the ICANN agenda. And I don't see the legal implications. So I'm really lost here. And this is something that probably can't have now a resolution. But we really need your help to understand why this is the case. This is one of the

issues where it's not a question that we can just simply say, "Well, that's the way things are." Because we don't know where is the harm. And we don't know why we are being relegated, because we can organize a Zoom meeting with our own means. That's not a question of budget. It's a question of principle. And this is something that we wanted to discuss with you.

We also don't understand exactly what kind of support, cooperation, I don't know what name to put into it when it comes to reaching out to ICANN engagement in combination with our meetings. And maybe we need a clearer idea of what is the role here of ICANN engagement. And we are completely open to understanding that we had a rough idea or an idea that has evolved with time.

Remember that I've been here for 15 years, so I've seen engagement do different things. I've seen ICANN staff do different things. So [inaudible] is an old cat as well, but not as involved as [inaudible] has been, many of the members of the group have been present at ICANN for a long time. So we need some clarity here about what is the what is the framework.

RUSS WEINSTEIN: So Nacho, can I?

NACHO AMADOZ: Please. Yes.

RUSS WEINSTEIN: So as you can imagine, we have a little bit of a back channel with the staff. We're trying to understand, I guess, what the what the concern is. So you were able to get on the schedule for this meeting. What's been different? Or what is the concern you're raising?

NACHO AMADOZ: I think that we cannot any longer hold our general assemblies within the ICANN infrastructure and agenda.

RUSS WEINSTEIN: Okay. Is it by chance you guys have a like a—I don't know, an external legal entity set up? Sam, is this the thing we talked about with charter?

SAM DEMETRIOU: Yeah, Russ, sorry to be late putting my hand up on this. This is something that we've experienced as the full stakeholder group as well. ICANN can host, including in person, or just ICANN zooms when we're not in person all of our ICANN and policy related meetings, but for the annual meeting of the corporation, we have to host that separately. I think what we've been told is the corporate records can't be stored on ICANN's infrastructure. That's the explanation that they gave us.

NACHO AMADOZ: So when we go back to face to face, that shouldn't be applying anymore, right? Because in a physical room, we keep our records. Or it applies as well because the meeting is being recorded, and therefore, it's still stored within ICANN? I don't know, I'm raising the point and

asking it because I don't know. But this is a point that really surprised us. Because, well, if this is the way, this is the way, but we've been doing that in the past for many years.

RUSS WEINSTEIN:

I'm trying to remember the instance, but it does have something to do with the formation of separate legal entities and sort of the purpose of those entities and sort of commingling corporate records. So I don't think you'd want your annual general assembly for your entity held with us, that you want that on your own infrastructure. Doing it on our Zoom, that's on our platform, that sort of thing.

I think it's probably a gray area when we're back in physical about can you use 10, 15, 20 minutes of the time you have allocated to use whatever physical space, switch over into your own Zoom platform, whatever so you can livestream it to your participants. I don't know all the detail there, but I'm happy to help you to sort of navigate it with our folks. But I know that was one issue that we worked on with Sam and the RrSG as they were evolving their corporate structure.

NACHO AMADOZ:

And you know, for us is a point where we lean towards the good side of being associated with ICANN. So for the Geos to meet within the agenda of an ICANN meeting—and I know we can do that in a separate room. But for us, the way the group became as a group was people met in the ICANN meetings so that we saw that there was a common situation where we could all share ideas and projects and concerns and work

together so that the group was formed. And it all comes associated with our experience within the ICANN meeting. So that goes as a no brainer for us.

And I find it hard to—I mean, I'm no California expert. I'm not California law expert. But I find it hard to understand why this is an issue where—I'm seeing you, Martin. But for me, I mean, it's how the Geos become together, because they work within the ICANN umbrella and throughout the ICANN issues around our ICANN life. And that's something that we do not want to miss. So maybe this is something that we need to express. Martin, go ahead, because otherwise I'm not gonna stop talking.

RUSS WEINSTEIN:

If I could just jump in, there's no problem with Geos continuing to have meetings like this one within the ICANN meetings, those I think just have to go through the RySG support team to go up to the GNSO Council and beyond just as you guys are sort of a subset of that RySG group from an ICANN constituency perspective.

So please don't take it as you're not you're not welcome to meet as a group within the ICANN setting. That's absolutely not the case. And we're happy to continue that. I think there's just some legalities related to your corporate business commingling with the ICANN world.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Noted. Martin, I've been told that we have just two minutes.

MARTIN SUTTON:

So I'll be very quick. I was just going to sort of say a word of support really. With the BRG for instance, we hold all of our member meetings, board meeting separate to anything from ICANN so that it keeps it very distinct and doesn't commingle with any recordings, transcripts, etc. And that's something we sort of evolved quite a few years ago, I think, so that our focus on ICANN meetings are all public, community orientated so it's about information sharing. If there's particular issues that we want to explore and go deeper on, these are the chances for us to do that and also showcase.

So what I mentioned earlier is just to be able to use that shorter time that we have now allocated. And sometimes it's very tricky even getting that time allocated for our sessions. But thankfully, those still continue. So all I would say is backing what Russ said, is probably just dissect away your formal entity meetings, so do those separate and off the agenda. The rest of it, I think should be absolutely fine. Thank you.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thanks for that. Yeah, we're about over our time. Thank you very much for being here with us. It really helped us start and continue the conversations that we've been having and that we hope to keep having. It was very useful, I think for me and for the ExCom as well. And we will try to convey that feeling and the homework that we need to do in order to make it work better to the members so that we can come back to you with more substance. Thank you all. Thank you very much.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]