ICANN75 | AGM – Joint Session: Fellows and NextGen with GAC and UASG
Sunday, September 18, 2022 – 09:00 to 10:00 KUL

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Guys, did you ping two Fellows? This is the last reminder to them. Okay. We'll get to it. So, guys, it's unacceptable. The session starts at 9:00 AM, you should be here five to nine at least. Otherwise, it's just not respectful to our presenters. Please, please, please, whenever you go for your breakfast, it takes time to get here, to pass the control, the checking. Please mind this timing. I appreciate that. And this will be my last reminder to all of you. Can we start the recording, please?

Hello, everyone. My name is Siranush Vardanyan. I'm managing the Fellowship program at ICANN. Today we have a great session in the role of learning about the ICANN community. We will have two presentations today and two great presenters today who will tell us about the GAC, Government Advisory Committee, and about the Universal Acceptance. They graciously agreed to meet with Fellows and the NextGeners here to talk about those communities to introduce you the key areas what you need to know about those communities and how you can get engaged. This is very important information for all of you and this is a unique opportunity to meet in person with those who are actively leading those communities.

The first, Government Advisory Community, the presenter is my beloved Tracy Hackshaw who is a Fellow always. He's one of the bright Fellows and part of the Fellowship family. We both together were Fellows at our time. So it was back in ICANN31, 32, I even don't

remember the timing. But since then, he's the great supporter of the program. He was the vice chair and then chair-elect for Nomination Committee. Then he was the vice chair for the Government Advisory Committee, and now he's an active participant of the ICANN community representing Trinidad and Tobago. Without further ado, my dear Tracy, the floor is yours.

TRACY HACKSHAW: Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone. As Siranush said, I'm Tracy Hackshaw. I am from Trinidad and Tobago. But actually, my new role in the GAC is I work for the Universal Postal Union. It's just a UN organization regulating—well, not regulating the postal sector but working with the postal sector. They also had up the .post business unit within the UPU, so I'm kind of have my feet in the government side as well as the GNSO side. So I think it's an interesting role that I have and to see the ICANN world from multiple perspectives, which is good for the multistakeholder model. I think I'll be able to answer some of your questions regarding that.

But I'm going to show a few slides about the GAC, Governmental Advisory Committee, just to let the GAC meetings are open. So that's when you are able to attend, don't feel afraid, don't feel bashful. Come into the GAC room and sit. I think I saw one or two. I saw my colleague, then Gabriel yesterday, who's ISOC, IGF Youth Ambassador, who I know very well, was in a GAC room yesterday. So you can join the GAC meetings and participate fully.

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Let me walk through a few slides for you. Just to let you know who is the GAC really? The GAC was established in 1999 as part of the whole ICANN opening up and getting larger structure. It is essentially the voice of governments and intergovernmental organizations like UPU, the UN organization I work for, in ICANN's multistakeholder model. There's many, many of these governments and IGOs in the GAC. There are 180 governments as members and 38 intergovernmental organizations as observers. So that's 218 observers and members within the GAC, which is quite a large group. You can imagine that could be quite large. Diverse views and opinions can be provided in the GAC, as well as it's interesting to manage that overall diverse view. The members and observers, they participate equally in all of the discussions within the GAC. However, only members—can't see the screen? Sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Tracy, apologies. The slides don't move in the Zoom Room so we're trying to figure it out. I can find out.

TRACY HACKSHAW: So let me continue. I'll look at my screen. So basically, only members are eligible to vote during elections. Observers can't vote. The GAC really only votes during the election period. One-third of the current membership with voting rights consider quorum at any meeting.

The GAC leadership—and I know that you're not seeing the slides but—okay, here we go. I think we're back. The GAC leadership consists of a single chair who is elected by the members. The term of the chair is

two years but the potential can be two consecutive two-year terms for the chair. So a chair can be elected for as long as four years.

The current chair is Manal Ismail from Egypt. She's in a final term. Actually, there's a GAC election that will be held, I believe, on Monday where there'll be a new chair and a series of new vice chairs elected. So you want to see that in action. You can see what's the process. When you come on, you'll find what's happening. Take a look at the schedule and you could attend the GAC election session, if you wish.

The vice chairs are—in my term, there are actually only three, of which I was one in 2013 to 2015, I believe. But somewhere between that time, actually, I was involved in that discussion. The vice chair quota was increased to five to better represent the wide diversity of the GAC. So right now there are as many as five vice chairs. You don't have to get all five elected but it seemed as if all five are being elected every year every time. So we're going to get five vice chairs to this year and one chair. Okay. Next slide, please.

All right, GAC support is provided by—you may be hearing a colleague of mine in the back helping—by a series of very, very capable professional ICANN staff members, Julia Charvolen. She's been one of my colleagues from a very long time. I think we're going backwards. Not sure what's happening, okay. But there are as many as five and they are basically are the engine room behind the GAC. Nothing can happen without them. They prepare all the briefing materials. They are the ones who actually drive the intersessional work within that GAC to ensure that all the members are meeting, reviewing

documents, and essentially discussing the issues that the GAC has to discuss when they come to the ICANN meeting three times a year.

So like with other SOs and ACs, the work of the GAC is not only at the ICANN meeting. You may find the most people attending, it's entirely possible, at an ICANN meeting, although it's remote and the pandemic that seems to have shifted substantially. So the intersessional work is extremely important. There are many calls, especially of working groups, but also to build the agenda to discuss important topics, if their communication to the Board and other community members that's also done via either intersessional discussions or online discussions. It's important to understand, if you're following the GAC that is not only at the meeting, that decisions are taken or consensus is built, but also intersessionally in between meetings.

So the GAC support staff, as mentioned, they organize meetings, provide briefings on the various issues. They manage the GAC website, which I encourage you to join to take a look at gac.icann.org where wide range of archival content and information on working groups and so on. They are the key link between ICANN Org and the other ICANN structures, including the Fellowship program, as you see here. They coordinate operational matters, including membership management, working group facilitation support, and coordination of community travel support.

So the team members, as you can see on the slide, are Rob Hoggarth, Fabien Betremieux—I hope my French is working, that's okay—Julia Charvolen, Benedetta Rossi, and Gülten Tepe. Julia is actually at the back of the room. So if you're going to have a chat with the GAC staff

member, if you have any time, she can give you any information that you would like to find out about what they do.

In terms of the GAC modalities, the way that GAC operates is based on consensus. I'm sure you're going to hear about the word consensus very much during the ICANN period. Consensus advice is provided in the form primarily of a communiqué that is issued at the end of each GAC meeting. As you can see, the definition via the GAC operating principles of consensus is understood to mean the practice of adopting decisions by general agreement in the absence of any formal objection. I believe you have done some consensus work already with the Fellowship program. So that may mean something to you or it may mean very different to what you have discussed, but that's the GAC view of it.

I've been involved as a leadership member of the GAC in trying to get consensus, especially among very sticky topics. The issue is really trying to, as we were discussing yesterday—this is a former chair, Heather Dryden, was very important and saying this—what can you live with? Basically, if you don't agree with everything, what can you live with? And someone said yesterday, "We are all equally unhappy." I think that's a good way of defining consensus. If you all are equally unhappy, that's probably a good way to consider it.

The GAC meets face to face three times a year in conjunction with ICANN meetings. But there are also, as mentioned, GAC internal working groups that are created as deemed necessary and they're either permanently or temporarily for a specific topic or task. The communiqué meeting minutes transcription recording of all open

meetings are posted online. As I mentioned, they're available at the GAC website and I'm sure via the various ICANN meeting websites that are archived as well.

So exactly what's the role of the GAC? The GAC is an Advisory Committee, and I'm sure you've maybe contrast already. So we're not an SO, we're not a Supporting Organization, we are an Advisory Committee. So that means we provide advice to the ICANN Board on issues of public policy, where there may be interaction between ICANN's activities or policies and national laws or international agreements. Now, the GAC has a special role, and I'll go through that shortly. In terms of its advice, when you look at other ACs in terms of how we operate.

So the GAC provides advice in accordance with its operating principles upon ICANN Board request or on its own initiative. I mentioned that comes out primarily in a communiqué, but GAC advice can be issued at any time to the Board via letter or other communication. The GAC advice is duly taken into consideration by the Board in accordance with Section 12.2 (a)(x-xi) of the ICANN Bylaws. In this presentation that you will receive, there's a link to that. What that means is that— it's very small—but essentially, the Board must consider GAC advice, as it says there, it must be duly taken into account both in the formulation of policies. In the event that the Board determines to take an action that is not consistent with GAC advice, it shall so inform the GAC and state the reasons why it decided not to follow that advice. Now, that has happened on a couple of occasions. I've been involved in a couple of these. Any GAC advice approved by a full GAC

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Committee consensus, understood to represent or to mean the practice of adopting decisions by general agreement in the absence of any formal objection, as I said before, may only be rejected by a vote of no less than 60% of the Board. That's very important to understand. The Governmental Advisory Committee and the Board will then try, in good faith and in a timely and effective manner, to find a mutually acceptable solution. The GAC will state whether any advice it gives to the Board is in fact GAC Consensus Advice.

That sounds complicated but that means that some advice can actually be not full consensus. We can have a situation where the advice is given and there are considerations that other countries may want to document and they will not join the consensus. So in this particular situation for the Board consideration, the GAC has to advise the Board that this is GAC Consensus Advice as defined in the operating principles and the Bylaws, which is, as we said before, without any formal objection from any GAC member.

Do you have any questions on that kind of thing? That's an important point that I wanted to make sure you understand. It's fairly self-explanatory but just to make sure you understand.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: I don't have any questions in the Zoom. But please, if you have, raise your hand in the Zoom.

TRACY HACKSHAW:	Excellent. Thank you. So this is very tiny, and I'm not going to go through this. We don't have time for that. But this is the process of how GAC Consensus Advice is considered by the Board. It's essentially some of you in IT know what's happening here. It's decision flow, really, of what happens when particular each stage of the process a yes or no decision is required and what happens next.

Again, Siranush, I think we've shared this with the Fellows and you can go through this. Long story short, it summarizes the process, which I just explained, of what happens when GAC advice needs to be discussed further, especially if there's going to be any Board rejection of the advice, and what happens in that process. Of course, if there's no objection by the Board, to the GAC advice, then it goes straight through. But if that is not the case, then this process kicks in. Essentially, it leads to hopefully a mutually agreeable solution at the end of the day.

There is at least one occasion where there was an actual full meeting of the GAC and the Board to discuss particular issue. I believe it's .xxx. For those who want to look at the history of that where the GAC and the Board actually had a separate meeting to discuss that particular issue in the face of GAC objection.

Into the GAC working methods, again, I don't want to spend a lot of time to go through all of these things for you because we have limited time. But if you look at the operating principles, there's a link in there, they are essentially the blueprint for how the GAC operates. These principles are being reviewed on a regular basis by a working group called the GAC Operating Principles Evolution Working Group. The last

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amendment was made in 2017 to allow for electronic voting, as I mentioned, in 2015, yes, in Buenos Aires, it was amended to allow for five vice chairs. There we go.

So GAC meetings are held, as I mentioned, three times a year, but they have preparations that are intersessionally. Agenda and briefs are circulated and posted online in advance of the meeting. So we've always worked online.

There was a time when I remember being given like a binder of very large amount of things. I was telling the staff at the time, "Why do we need binders? Can we just do it online?" I think we actually worked very well to get everything online. Even though for governments—so you all who are in government, government-like people—in the GAC, we've managed to finally get all of our members to agree and to work online, including those who are most reluctant and most resistant, and they all are online now. Of course, the pandemic would have completely removed all remnants of any potential offline type of intervention. So the online that we're working with actually became the modus operandi and has followed through ever since.

The GAC meets face to face three times a year, obviously, if that's possible, in conjunction with ICANN meetings. All GAC meetings are open by default. I'm pleased to say that that was one of the decisions we took when I was vice chair.

The GAC can hold closed meetings if deemed necessary. When I first joined ICANN and the community, there were GAC closed meetings, including communiqué drafting. But one by one, we dropped all of the

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closed meetings and they're now all open unless there's a particular closed one, which has not really happened in some time.

Real-time interpretation is provided in all six UN languages, plus Portuguese, which I think is fairly unique in some of the ICANN communities. So we have six languages plus Portuguese. As you know, we have several large Portuguese-speaking members within the GAC—Brazil, several African countries, of course, Portugal. So we do have Portuguese interpretation within the GAC. We also do with written captioning. Significantly, remote participation, again, especially since 2020. And all meetings are recorded and available as per our open process in the archive, so you can view the meetings directly after. As I mentioned, that GAC produces a communiqué at the end of each meeting and the communiqué meeting minutes. Transcription recording of all of our meetings are posted online.

Just some highlights in terms of what the recent pandemic brought to the table. Significantly more intersessional work. As you can imagine, the GAC meetings extended the footprint as to what a GAC meeting was. It was able to do prioritization of topics. Communiqué drafting had its own challenges because normally it's put up on a screen as you want to follow that, check the ICANN agenda how communiqué is drafted. So it was a bit challenging for many members to go fully online to communiqué drafting. But again, adaptation and flexibility—the word pivot, as you know, was the big word during the pandemic. So they made a pivot. I think we've overcome those challenges now, and I think many GAC members appreciate now the full online

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communiqué drafting approach because we're seeing less GAC members attending meetings face to face, which is very interesting.

We have technical challenges, obviously. As you all know, time zone challenges. That becomes a major issue. If you're not meeting face to face and you're basically working at your office or your home with your family, how do you meet in the time zone of the ICANN meeting or the GAC intersessional meetings? There were daily briefs during the meeting week, and we had a 70-hour period for communiqué review.

The GAC also holds regularly a high-level governmental meeting generally every two years, except for the pandemic, which created a challenge for that. As you can see, the last meeting was held in Spain in Barcelona in ICANN63 in 2018, and the 2020 meeting was not held for obvious reasons. So that is being discussed as to when the next high-level governmental meeting will be held. At that meeting, the well GAC reps, in case you don't know, they're not necessarily high-level governmental officials. They're normally technocrats within the various governmental authorities. These meetings normally have ministers or permanent secretaries or chief—whatever they call in their various countries coming to the meeting and discussing as somebody might have seen a UN type situation. That's sometimes the first time that some GAC members, ministers have participated in a process like this, a multistakeholder process. I've accompanied a minister to one of our meetings and he was very impressed at how this would compare to, let's say, a UN situation, which is a little different.

The high-level governmental meetings provide an opportunity to reaffirm the critical role that governments play at ICANN and enable a

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clearer understanding of that role. Because many governments, especially underserved communities, are challenged by understanding what ICANN's role is. If [inaudible] ITU, which is a UN organization, and maybe one or two other regional organizations that are familiar with their various telecom or ICT groupings in their regions, in the Asia Pacific or Latin or Caribbean or Africa or Southeast Asia, Asia generally. But in terms of what ICANN does, it's confusing for many governments. So these meetings help provide that guidance as to why people are coming to this meeting in the first place. What is this DNS thing that they talk about, this Internet stuff? And also issues that governments are very interested in like cybersecurity, which you know ICANN doesn't deal with specifically. But the technical issues underlying cybersecurity—DNSSEC, DNS abuse, etc.—are being discussed here. So they understand that the technical aspects that relate to the DNS are being discussed right here. So it's very interesting for them to listen about that.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Tracy, we have a couple of questions, if you don't mind to take. One question was from Levy, a Fellow. You mentioned about five vice chairs and five staff support. Do their roles overlap, or if not, what are their roles?

TRACY HACKSHAW: In terms of the staff, I don't believe they overlap. I believe we need each of those members. They all have very specialized responsibilities. I'm not going to go into that one here. Rob is the head of the whole

secretariat, and then each of the support have their own specific responsibility. Julia is I think the policy manager. Julia, about that, can you say anything?

JULIA CHARVOLEN: Hello, everyone. Yeah, we're all a bit policy manager's roles. But yes, I agree with Tracy. There's no overlap. It's different. What we do is support the committee, support the GAC leadership and everything they do. We have different roles, whether it's relating to policy issues, whether it's more logistical in ICANN meeting preparations, we have a pretty much defined role. We try to support the leadership as well as the committee as much as possible.

TRACY HACKSHAW: That's very important because there's also the leadership, they meet separately. The GAC needs to support that because that drives the GAC discussions.

In terms of the vice chairs, as I mentioned, there was a diversity discussion in the GAC about that that led to the five vice chairs being set up. It's not specifically done to represent all the regions in the world but it generally falls into that category. So, if you look at the world, there are roughly five large regions, and the GAC leadership vice chairs sort of slot into that. It's not mandatory that that happens, but to the best effort that we can do it, that's what tends to happen for the vice chairs. They don't necessarily represent their region while they're on leadership. But I'm assuming, because given my previous role, that's because you are from that region, your positions and your views

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are filtered into discussions as a leader by default. Because you come from particular region, and without getting into all the nuances of that, that could in fact affect and sway certain things that are being discussed on a GAC agenda.

To a large extent, the vice chairs are also assigned topics, they call topic leads, as well as other GAC members who it's not necessarily only the vice chairs. They are expected to, again, using my own experience, they're looked upon by the chair to take leadership on these topics, as well as to potentially lead discussions in the absence of the chair, as well as to drive thinking that the chair alone can drive GAC thinking. The chair also sits on the ICANN Board so they also work together to provide that sort of maybe the next topic to discuss is X or this has been an interesting discussion happening in this forum. I heard about it happening in the GNSO or was discussed at this meeting. We should probably put this on the agenda, things like that.

We also see vice chairs tending to maybe lead working groups sometimes and so on. That depends on their level of activity. But there's no real, I would say, defined—there's no vice chair for policy or vice chair for members and things like that. Something like that. So it depends on how the leadership of that particular year once it operates and what they assign to the vice chairs. Did I get that right, Julia? I think so.

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SIRANUSH VARDANYAN:	Tracy, if we can sum up to take two questions only for just finishing the part. If you want to sum up now, then we'll just take questions later.
TRACY HACKSHAW:	As I mentioned, there are working groups within the GAC. You can see them at the GAC website. One of them particularly close to my heart, Under-Served Regions Working Group. But there are several other topics that you can see there—Public Safety, which is dealing with things like DNS abuse and so on, and a series of other working groups that the GAC topics are driven towards. Meeting like this, the GAC has been working more inclusively with the community over the last few years, getting involved in PDPs, getting involved in other working groups.
	One of the things I do want to mention before I wrap up is that you have to remember from the GAC perspective, you don't represent yourself. You represent your country or your organization, and that means that if you're in a working group or some other session, you can't represent your own views. It has to be a view of whatever you're trying to say. The GAC is not a single view. So if you're representing the GAC in a working group or other session, that's becomes challenging. So that's been a largest question over the last several years. So when GAC members representing the working groups, it's very clear what their role is and what they're trying to do, and they come back to the GAC to report and to get guidance and advice of how to represent their views. The GAC views, not your views. Their views in the working group.

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I will just try and get to the end. So the GAC priorities are currently—I'm sure going to hear about this incessantly throughout the next few days—new gTLD subsequent rounds and procedures, WHOIS Registration Data Services, DNS abuse mitigation, IGO Rights Protections Mechanisms, which is Inter-Governmental Organizations, and IDNs, which I think is coming up next in our discussion.

For this meeting, we are currently involved in capacity building, [a class] on a weekend. Feel free to join us when you have an opportunity. It's a whole day session today on a whole range of topics, including what you just saw. So you're going to get our full capacity building activity, if you wish to join that and you have time, as well as the key issues related to the hot topics I mentioned before.

In terms of how you can get involved, one of the things I do want to leave you with, if you're not from government and you're from another part of the stakeholder groupings, find out who your GAC member is from your country. Understand who they are, get their contact information. Visit them. They're right across to the next room, I think. Who are you? My name is X, my name is Y. I would like to talk to you about issue X, issue Y. GAC members generally don't—I wouldn't say they're shy, but they don't come out to say, "Who are you? Are you from Uganda? Are you from Kenya? I want to talk to you." So introduce yourself to them and tell them, "This is what I think." You'd be surprised that they're all humans, they are all people. So they're not just things that you think about, "Oh, the GAC. This GAC member…" It has a strange name, right? The GAC, the GAC. They're people. So we talk to them. Talk to them, that's my best advice to you and say, "I am

(name here) from (country here), stakeholder group here) and my interest is in this. What do you think about this? And can you provide that input into your GAC discussions about what our views are?" And you'd be surprised to know that many of them are, in fact, willing to listen and to talk about this once you approach them. So I think that's it. Thank you very much.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you very much, Tracy. They think you're really very interesting. There are a lot of questions coming. But today, the entire day, GAC is running the sessions for like Outreach sessions. If you are interested, as Tracy mentioned, you're welcome to go. The sessions are open. We'll take just one or two questions. Mouloud, you're the first.

MOULOUD KHELIF: Good morning. Thank you, Tracy. Mouloud Khelif, ICANN Fellow for the record. You mentioned that GAC representatives were technocrats, not senior government level. Can you give us a sense of their background? Are they ICT people? Are they policy people? Are they lawyers? Just give us a sense.

And maybe a follow-up question. Every couple of years a high-level government meeting—how does it work having senior level people, senior officials, ministers who are used to meet with ministers? How does it work to have them with maybe people who are not at their level? What's the dynamic like?

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TRACY HACKSHAW: All right, your first question is all of the above. So we have high-level officials in the GAC as well as people who are from what we call the Foreign Service, so diplomats, workers in the embassies, workers for UN. So they represent the UN system and they also represent at ICANN meeting, as well as technical people. Some countries actually have multiple GAC representation, so they're delegations. So you'll find there's three or four people that may come to a meeting to cover the entire area. Countries who have resources can afford to send more people to the meetings. For those countries that are less resourced, they try to find someone I guess who is more into what ICANN issues are. It tends to be a technical person but it could very well be a Foreign Service person who is well-versed in Internet governance issues.

In terms of the second question, it's an interesting question in terms of how they meet. At the high-level governmental meeting, literally, the way it's set up is that the GAC rep and the minister or high-level official sit together. So the GAC rep almost advises the official but the government official is the one who will be the one speaking. You'll be literally whispering in the person's ear and/or providing some notes, and they will be speaking in that regard. If they're well-versed, because you can brief them in advance, then they will need you to be whispering in their ear. But most times, you see a lot of us bring and note passing and so on.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: A question from Lavish. "What is the great challenge for the GAC?" Great challenge.

TRACY HACKSHAW: This is my perspective only. I don't want to represent the views of the GAC again. That's a GAC thing. So my perspective is a great challenge, I think, is to really contribute to the decision-making process in ICANN because you hear often within the GAC—I'm just being very frank—as an advisory body within the GAC, it is not typical for governments to be just advising an entity. The governments make decisions, right? In your own country, there are decision-making bodies. So to come here and advise a board about the Internet sounds weird to them, to many GAC members. So some of that challenge is trying to understand their role in that process. You hear a lot of that if you listen to GAC members talk. But also to get more involved in decision-making by participating fully in the community. Again, I mentioned a challenge for that generally. In addition to that, that leads immediately to the point where "Why are you coming to a GAC meeting if you can't make decisions?" It's just what the governments tell many especially smaller countries. "Why are you going to spend six days in Malaysia and come back—what did you do?" "I went to a meeting and I went to a few receptions, drank some drinks."

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Tracy. I think we will not be able to take more questions. I know there are a lot. But, Tracy, if you don't mind, I know you have full schedule, but if you can stay a bit after the session, people can reach you. And you are invited for the official Fellowship photos for part of the Fellowship at 11:00 AM.

TRACY HACKSHAW: Thank you very much.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you very much. Please applause to our presenter. It's always great having you and telling us about the important role of GAC in the multistakeholder model.

With that, I would like to give the floor to our second presenter for today. It's an important topic, considered as a hot topic, Universal Acceptance. We are lucky to have the guru of Universal Acceptance here with us, Ajay Data. I don't want to give so many titles Ajay has, but for me he's guru on Universal Acceptance. So without further ado, Ajay, the floor is yours.

AJAY DATA: Good morning, everyone present here in this room, and somewhere in the world, good afternoon, good evening. This is about Universal Acceptance we are going to listen today. This is not a very technical topic but a very, very, very important topic from knowledge perspective and carrier perspective. Next slide, please. Thank you. I have the control.

So we will just cover, we will share a little bit about UA, about how we work with the working groups and the draft reports, why it matters. We are going to talk a little bit about Universal Acceptance Day which is a very unique thing. This is the first time we are going to talk about it

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at ICANN75. We will talk about the meetings and we will take some questions if you have any. Next slide, please.

UA's vision is very simple for everyone to know. It's all domain names and all e-mail addresses must work in all software applications. We will explain it to you very simply.

This looks very simple. This looks is it not happening. But there is a big gap in the world. We call this there is a bug or a broken Internet and we need to fix that. We all need to fix that. Because we see now the domain names and e-mail addresses do not work, we have an impact. And if we solve that problem, what do we do? We bring more people online and we call them next billion will come online. We provide choice to the consumer, we provide competition, and provide broader access to the end user. This is a large impact of Universal Acceptance if we are able to achieve the way it is designed.

This group has started in 2015. Again, it's a community initiative to address Universal Acceptance, which advocates and engage with relevant stakeholders to make their applications UA-ready. This is an opportunity to talk to you in this regard. Next slide, please.

So this is a very important slide. This provides you the coverage of the vision which I just said. All domain names and all e-mail addresses must be accepted fully. So which domain names I'm talking about and which e-mail addresses I'm talking about? These are the examples in front of you. So if you see the little different color than black, .sky.

So let me tell you a little bit of history in Internet. Normally, when we see the domain names, we see .com, .net, .org, .int, .edu, so on and so

forth. How about a programmer has programmed his software considering that only these top-level domain names are possible in the applications? When the applications got designed—and they were not wrong because they were just seven of them, top-level domain names—to provide a better user experience and validation, the code got designed that way that considering that there could be only the list of top-level domain names are possible. But the world changed. ICANN started offering more top-level domain names.

Then the world changed, the software started requiring to change because now they were rejecting a valid domain name as invalid domain name because of the way programmers made the program. This is the first example of .sky.

Another [inaudible] which programmers took was that there could be only three characters after the dot like .com, .net. It could be only three characters. The world changed again. We saw the country code top-level domain names which are of two characters, .us, .id, .in for India, so on and so forth. But now, you will be surprised to note, you could have 64 characters after the dot. And that's technically possible, that's legal. So, do the interfaces or the softwares will allow that entire string of domain name to be entered as valid? So what if somebody has programmed it with only a limitation of characters that only could be three characters after the dot. So if the number of characters of the dot are more than three, it is invalid, than this is quite a change. So this created another problem. So I gave you new top-level domain names, the longer top-level domain names, and the third type of domain name, which is a very new one, a domain name used to be

only ASCII characters, A to Z and top-level domain names, nothing else. Now, there could be IDN domain names, which could be non-ASCII characters. That's the third example, if you see. The domain name may not to have an English character or ASCII character in that domain name, which created a much more bigger problem because the softwares were written only for the validation of A to Z or zero to nine or whatever the valid characters at that time were there. But the world changed again, and now it allowed to have the non-ASCII characters in the domain name and top-level domain names, as the case may be. This is the third example.

So these three domain names started getting rejected at some applications and some part of the applications. This is one scope of the domain names. If you see the next part, that is e-mail addresses. These e-mail addresses are made out of these three domain names which are above. These made domain names are made in combination. So these are the five examples. If you see the first example with long top-level domain name and the mailbox name is an ASCII, if you see the next example, mailbox name is Mark, which is normal ASCII characters, but it has an IDN. You can see there are special characters in the domain name, which is .org.

Next is a very important example where the mailbox name is non-ASCII character but the domain name is an ASCII. Normally, this you will not find but it is technically possible, people might use it, and technically it is valid. Actually, those who knows Hindi, this is my real e-mail address right now. And if somebody copies this in a presentation and tries to send me an e-mail, this mail should come to

me and I will respond. That will actually allow us to test but I'm going to say further.

The last example is IDN again but it is a right to left script, which is an Arabic script. Arabic scripts are written from right to left. Normally, we write from left to right. So this is another example of Universal Acceptance problem.

So how do we test that my software is UA-ready or not? Does it have a problem? How do we test that if an e-mail address or a domain name in your software page can be typed in? So let us say I go to an ICANN site. Let us take an example of when you're registered. Can I type in my e-mail address in that box where the e-mail address is asked? If it is accepted, if I can type in then it is the first pillar—and below you can see the five pillars—accept as ticked, yes, it accepts it. If I type and say submit, it is validated as well, or does it say it's invalid e-mail address? Do it process it well? Which means it starts the processing for my registration. Will it store it in the database as well? Will it display it back when I log in again or wherever it is required? These are the five pillars of Universal Acceptance: Accept, Validate, Process, Store, and Display. If your application or mobile app, whatever it is, can follow these five steps for any e-mail address or a domain name in question, your application is UA-ready. If not, then you have a UA problem. We call it you have a bug in your software. And you might be missing the opportunity, which we're going to talk about next. Next slide, please.

So there's a study which we did. You see e-mail acceptance globally. You have the examples. You can see from 2017 to 2022, we do it every two years, the study, not much progress has happened. You can see

that in each example. Obviously, we have a very, very bad result and very less acceptance, if I can say, in IDN domain names and IDN e-mail addresses. Normally, ASCII domain names with new short and new long works more than 80%. But the rest, everything is less than 20%, which is not the case we want. You don't want the word to have a valid domain name and a valid e-mail address and it doesn't work at 80% of the cases. That is the situation we are in for many domain names and e-mail addresses in the world, which is obviously not acceptable data for all of us. Next slide, please.

So just to give you a more better picture who are the leaders around here so you may remember these faces, these are the people who are very actively involved in Universal Acceptance. All of them are experts. I was recognized as guru, you can consider me as one of the volunteers along with all of them. The left three is I'm the chairman of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group. I have Abdalmonem Galila and Pavanaja, both are vice chairs. There is an election process through which these leaders are accepted and elected. Now we have working group chairs, you can see those names. There are, for that, leaders there. We have few leaders here. I can see Anil Jain sitting there in front. Anil, you please raise your hand. That's all. I can see Satish Babu is here. We have many leaders here sitting there. Nabil is sitting here, the senior professor there. So you have people from various parts of the world and leaders in this Universal Acceptance. Next slide, please.

We have more leaders. This is a very important thing which you must learn. And if you are part of any of the country, you may like to join that local initiative. Local initiatives are the group of volunteers in a

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particular region. They try to take UA initiative further in that region. We understood at a leadership position that at a central level of UASG, it is very difficult to understand each country's or geography's needs and cultural issues and what is the most important process through which UA will be adopted there. Whom to address? Who are the right stakeholders? Who are the people whom we should connect with? So we initiated this process of a local initiative where we thought that we will have a group of volunteers. If there is a region that would have a group of volunteers, we have a standard proposal always open. You can apply for it. We also fund that proposal and we support that proposal with our technical knowledge, which is there. We create and recognize this official local initiative. So you can see CIS-EE, we have Maria, China, Thailand, India. We have these leaders there. You can connect with any of them if you want to learn more. But if you are part of any of these regions, please join these local initiatives. These are also the leaders who understand you very well. Next slide, please.

So how does the UA work? It brings you an opportunity. So if you want to contribute in this area, we have working groups, working groups for a specific focus, because it's an area where knowledge and technical knowledge is also required, not just only UA knowledge. You need to also see how this problem gets solved and how to guide. Hence, we have a very specific Technology Working Group which Satish Babu leads and he chairs that. We have EAI Working Group, Mark leads that. We have Measurement, Communication, Local Initiative UA ambassadors. These are all working groups, which is there.

Let me tell you a little bit about UA ambassadors. UA ambassadors are the people which we appoint in a particular city or a region in a country who would like to take the UA work further in that area technically and awareness purposes. This is very local, very specific to that region. We have many ambassadors worldwide. And if you are interested and if you know a little bit about UA, please contact us. We are appointing new ambassadors who are expert into this area, who have understood of IDNs and the AI, and would like to take this work further. We also support financially also for travel and local events UA ambassadors.

Very recently, we requested Göran Marby, the CEO of ICANN, to accept the honorary UASG ambassadorship. That was done because of a very specific region because we want that leadership on the people who talk global forums should talk about UA-ship worldwide. If you go in World Economic Forum, if you go and talk about it in UNESCO and ITU, we want UA to be addressed everywhere. So if we find a leader who would like to address, understands UA, and because ICANN has UA as a top strategic initiative under the five-year plan, Universal Acceptance falls in that, so whom we could find better than the CEO of ICANN itself, so he can present as honorary UASG ambassador and talk about UA wherever he goes.

UASG liaisons. This is something which we have initiated very recently. You should know, we started talking to GNSO, ALAC, ccNSO, GAC everywhere and see that could we have a liaison officer? We thought that this is a very internal community. We have just a neighbor. Why do we travel the worldwide and raise awareness? We have our own

neighbors who are already in the World Wide Web, who are traveling, whom we meet. We have an opportunity to meet every quarter. How do we engage with them? We created the [inaudible] around and requested them to create a liaison officer. The idea is to once we have a liaison officer, we can exchange the information more fluidly. And exchange the knowledge, whatever is update required from that side and decide we can exchange this very clearly. We are waiting for GAC representative but we have Christian from GNSO, Satish from ALAC, and Qing Cai from ccNSO. These are people who are already now placed to come connect with UASG. If you want to know more about people involved, this list is there in the People section of uasg.tech site.

Very important one. We also do the Readiness Report and we also have our Strategic Action Plan every year. We are almost 700 volunteers. We discuss them under the working groups. We also have this discussion with the volunteers by communicating with them and we'd have their inputs. So both the reports are worth reading. They are available freely on the website, uasg.tech, please look at them and improve your knowledge. Look at it, what we are up to this year. Next slide, please.

This is a very important section. This is about why does the UA matters? Why we should really worry about it? Because this is not just about technical work of accepting domain names and e-mail addresses. It has a very large impact because it provides you the choice. Imagine if you want to have a .sport and if you want to have your country .africa, and this domain name doesn't work. You have a

domain name, it doesn't work the way .com works, it is not a good idea to have that domain name. And your entire initiative and passion will go away. So what we are saying is we are supporting the new choice of customer, new choice of culture representation and brands and geographies to pick up new top-level domain names and by solving that problem of acceptance.

Internet population is made up of 4.5 billion users. And next billion people are coming online by 2023. Which means that a lot of people are coming which are specific to the language, they would like to have domain name in their own language. If the language domain name doesn't work the way it should, then again, we are not providing them the opportunity to have the domain name, which was the way an ASCII domain name will work.

Business opportunity. We did the study and according to me, it's a conservative number. We supported almost 10 billion opportunities, and this is I'm sure is increasing every year because the number of domain names are increasing in the non-Latin script, and we are having new top-level domain names are going to be announced very soon. Because of the LGR work which has happened, lots of LGRs have gone to the root zone and this will all create an opportunity for next millions of domains and thousands of top-level domain names, which will not be having three characters after the dot and only in ASCII, there will be non-ASCII characters. This is the region that opportunity is very, very large.

So, if people are trying to build, carry around domain names and technology, this knowledge and making the software UA-ready

becomes a very solid carrier opportunity. That's the reason we say it's a huge carrier opportunity because it provides you a clear differentiator between just having a Java programmer or iOS programmer. Now you are not just iOS programmer, you know how to make a software which is worldwide-ready, which is accepted worldwide. So this knowledge provides you an edge over just becoming a programmer. If you have that knowledge, it provides you the career opportunity with clear differentiator. Next slide, please.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Ajay, we have only two minutes. We need to get the room ready for the next session. If you can sum up briefly and then we'll follow up.

AJAY DATA: Okay. I think I have two slides.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you.

AJAY DATA: So another opportunity which I would like to share. 16th February, we are going to do this event first time. 16th February is the UA Day where we are going to celebrate the UA Day. Please block your calendar. If you are part of any region, you would like to do something, you would like to volunteer, you would like to execute a UA Day yourself, please hand out a proposal. We are considering the proposals to engage with you, we will provide you the material, and we will provide you the

support to execute a UA Day event. And if there is no event happening and if you want to volunteer, please go ahead and do so, we would like to support you in that fashion too. Next slide, please. Next slide.

So this is what is happening in this ICANN. Just to let you know, we are talking right now that is Sunday, and these are the interventions which are happening of UA. So if you continue to have interest in Universal Acceptance, please look at those events. These are all available in ICANN Schedule. You can find them by typing Universal Acceptance and the schedule itself. You can join all of them to understand in more detailed way around Universal Acceptance. Next slide, please.

That's all. That's our second last slide. You have these pages. You need not to actually take a picture and download. This presentation is available on ICANN Schedule. You can download this and have the links in there. You can join these social media links, through Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and be aware of what's happening in UA, and connect with Universal Acceptance Steering Group. This is a non-rejection group. Any working group you would like to join, any mailing list you would like to join, you will be welcomed freely. So please don't hesitate to join and take part in Universal Acceptance activities. Next slide, please. Thank you very much.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Ajay. We will take just one question from [Hafiz]. Please go ahead.

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HAFIZ FAROOQ	First of all, thank you very much for the excellent presentation. I just have a question about the cybersecurity aspect. I remember I have seen a few of the internationalized domain. They were blocked by the firewalls. I mean your group is interacting with the security vendors to work with NLP and statistical algorithms they use for blocking such kind of content?
AJAY DATA:	So there is a two-way. One is they don't even understand what is IDN and they block it. But this is not about the security issue. This is just about the UA problem as we are talking about. So that's one problem that is getting resolved. We need to talk to the vendors that they need not to really block because it's a Hindi domain name. It's as good as [data.en or data.arab]. Let us say my example of two domain names, they are exactly the same. And they will pose the same similar security issues from the firewall perspective, whatever it is, if they will pose one.
	Second, are we talking to them? Yes, of course. We are talking and solving, talking to every entity we can imagine where the domain names are getting rejected just because it has a new shape or not in the original shape, which they would expect. What is original shape is not because it is just a legacy. It is not the [inaudible]. It's just a legacy that it could be three characters after the dot. It could be only in English. The top-level domain name could be only it was Z and so on and so forth. These rules got designed because of the last 15-20 years of Internet. Now, last 10 years, this has changed. So we need to change our softwares. The change of softwares cannot happen overnight.

Billions of dollars have invested into the softwares, and a lot of new softwares are getting returned. So what we say is to plan it, understand it, and start rolling this out.

So like e-mail addresses, for example, ICANN has been rolling out that we need to change the domain names to a sub IDNs, have an e-mail address and mailing list where I could give my e-mail address in Hindi to become part of the mailing list of the ICANN. Can I? Answer is no right now. But will it not happen? I think this is already in pipeline. This should happen very soon. What is more important is to recognize this problem, that there is a problem, and then plan your solution around it. Solution is easy, but we need to recognize it first.

HAFIZ FAROOQ   Okay. Thank you very much for the explanation.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN: Thank you, Ajay. I would like to thank also Seda, my colleague, who posted the links to the entire information on Universal Acceptance. Please feel free to contact Ajay. His e-mail address also was posted in the chat. Also you can contact Seda for any related questions.

With that, once again I would like to thank Tracy and Ajay for their time to be here with you Fellows and NextGeners. My huge appreciation for your time. And thank you, our tech support and interpreters, for your great support. With that, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much. Please stop the recording.

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