

**Transcription ICANN Singapore  
Meeting Strategy Working Group  
Sunday 23 March 2014**

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Jonathan Robinson: Okay, everyone, thanks. Welcome to our next session. If we could start the recording please. Thank you. Welcome to - if I could have quiet in the room if you do need to continue conversations if we could continue them outside the room please?

So welcome to our next session. This is an update from the Meeting Strategy Working Group. We're going to hear from Michelle Chaplow and Donna Austin and I know Sebastian Bachollet from the Board is also here as part of this session. I think you were the chair of the working group, is that right, Sebastian? Yeah, thank you.

So welcome to our colleagues. Michelle, over to you and then I think you're going to be followed up by Donna so here we go.

Michelle Chaplow: Thank you, Jonathan. The Meeting Strategy Working Group was formed a year ago in Beijing. The group is made up of 21 members chaired by Sebastian Bachollet. There 16 community members from diverse areas of the community, three members of staff and two Board members, Sebastian and Chris Disspain.

Basically our mandate has been to gather information, exchange ideas and propose changes to the routine meetings strategy both at a strategic level and an operational level.

ICANN has actually been hosting meetings since 1999 and the first meeting was held here in Singapore 15 years ago. For the first four years there was actually four meetings a year and then in 2003 that was changed to only three meetings per year so the last 11 years have been three meetings per year.

The main focus of our work has been on scheduling the conference agenda, looking at the length of the conference and the number of meetings per year. On 25 February we published our draft report and your comments are most welcome.\

Next slide please, Lars. You can also send comments and on Twitter and this is the hashtag ICANNmswg. At the moment we have one lonely comment on the ICANN Website and we'd really like to have some more.

Next slide. Okay so this is basically an overview of what we have right now with the meetings. There's three meetings per year. We have any regional rotation. And one of the challenges has been that basically in the Durban meeting there was 238 sessions over five days so obviously there's going to be some conflict, people can't be in two places at once and it's pulling everybody, you know, in different directions.

So if you also look on the graph as the number of people have grown from ICANN 1 with just 100 attendees and 20 different sessions, from the Durban meeting we were up to 1800 people and 238 sessions so naturally that will increase and more conflicts. So the Meeting Strategy Working Group have looked into all of these issues.

Next slide please. There was overwhelming support in our group to maintain three meetings per year. We've called them Meeting A, B and C. Meeting A is more or less what we have now but with some improvements. Meeting B will be the smaller meeting - it's recommended to be a smaller meeting basically focused on SO AC policy development work and outreach plus cross constituency work.

The final meeting, Meeting C, will be the grand finale, the annual general meeting and focusing on showcasing ICANN's work. In terms of length and duration, Meeting A we're looking at six days so the weekend plus the four days, more or less the same as we have now.

Meeting B we're looking at four days with four day basically concentrating on SO AC work so, you know, people can roll their sleeves up and have the time that the community are requesting.

And Meeting C will be up to eight days but obviously you can - it can be divided into sections which you do and do not want to attend. Next slide please.

We'd also - within our recommendations everybody wanted, well, three meetings. We came to consensus on that and also regional rotation within the three meetings.

And one of the really good things about this Meeting B, the smaller meeting, is that it opens up new locations that basically Nick Tomaso and his team haven't been able to host meetings in these particular areas. So, you know, there may be some great venues in Africa, India but they just won't hold the amount of people and the number of rooms that we require for the larger meetings. So hopefully Meeting B will be a great improvement with these new recommendations.

Next slide please. Okay so I'm just going to hand you off to my colleague, Donna Austin, to explain the rest.

Donna Austin: Thanks, Michelle. So we understand that one of the concerns for the GNSO was that adequate time still existed for the various constituencies to do their work during the ICANN meeting. So this was certainly one of the considerations that we spent quite a bit of time on. And we do believe that the structure that we've come up with will actually allow to do that.

We haven't, in this slide deck that we presented today, we haven't gone into detail about how we think that - the break up of time will actually be. But if you read the report we do identify Meeting A, B and C and we give you an indication of what we think that later time would be so how the structure of the days would be.

One of the things that we discussed at some length is that while there seems to be adequate time for internal SO/AC work one of the - one of the problems was that there wasn't enough time for the cross community interaction. And we saw that as a weakness within the current meeting structure.

So we believe that the format that we've come up with will afford greater opportunity for cross community engagement and outreach so that was one of the primary drivers for us.

And just to give you an indication of what the kind of breakdown of the days would be, I think Michelle spoke to the conflicting schedules that we all come up against. And there was a period of time where Monday was kind of a day that there was supposed to be non conflicted sessions.

So where - the aim of what we've done is to try to go back to that so that Monday is a day that is clean and you won't have three or four competing sessions going on at any one time so that's what we would like to see. But

there might be some changes in our thinking to try to accommodate that but hopefully the framework that we've come up with will allow you to do that.

Next slide please, Lars. The other potentially - this is - the one piece of feedback we've had from the Registry Stakeholder Group when we discussed this is the public for them will continue at the first and third meetings that what we're proposing is that there will be a public forum at the second meeting and there won't be Board meeting at the second meeting either.

So we've kind of pared back the second meeting to allow us to do that regional rotation because the smaller meetings the venues don't have to be as big so we can get that regional rotation in. And by pairing it back we concentrate specifically on the SO/AC work and that's why there's, you know, Quite we are proposing that no public forum for, you know, that meeting.

For the public forum for the first and third meetings there would be a public forum session early on in the meeting on the Monday but it wouldn't be a public forum session in the way that we understand it, it's more about the community or the SO ACs providing an update on what issues they will be discussing during the week so it gives the community a bit of a heads up and some time for discussion before everybody goes off into their separate ways.

The public forum on I think the - we tried to move away from saying Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, we've just identified days. But on the last day there would be another - a second public forum session which would be more in line with how we understand the public forums to be now. But it's a shorter timeframe, it's only 90 minutes.

Next slide please, Lars. So the recommendations that we've come up are designed to drive the following benefits. So enhanced cross community interaction by increasing time for networking, social interaction and cross community work; increase efficient use of time by each part of the community

and as a whole attending the meetings so this goes to trying to restructure the days and the work that's being done within them.

Increase the concentrated time of policy work while reducing session overlap or conflict. Increase opportunity for issue-based and/or language-based interactions and reduce the meeting length for some groups based upon their focus and interest.

So that's the end of our presentation but we're happy to answer any questions.

Jonathan Robinson: Thank you both. I certainly feel clearer on where you got to having seen some of the progress along the way. Brett.

Brett Fausett: Thank you. I think this is very well done. Let me just tell you one place where I may be skeptical and that's that I'm skeptical that you're ever going to have a meeting that's lightly attended and that's the Meeting Number 2 that you said smaller venues. I mean, think about sometimes events overwhelm us like the IANA discussion from just the last week.

If Meeting Number 2 this year were in a very small forum I think that just because of the importance of what's coming up people would want to go there. And so I worry that if you pick smaller venues for Meeting Number 2 some thing is going to, at some point, overwhelm the meeting and people are going to try to get there and the facilities may not be adequate for all the people who want to come. So that - I guess that's one place where I worry.

Donna Austin: So, Brett, we appreciate that. I think the numbers that attend the meeting isn't so much the issue. The problem with a meeting such as this is, you know, you might have noticed that the GAC has a different format in the way that they've set up their meeting. So by the GAC having a U-shape like this it increases the size of the venue requirements. So it's not necessarily the

number of people that attend that put the pressure on the venue it's actually about the logistical capability.

So, you know, I take your point but I'm not sure that it's purely about the number of attendees that would impact on it; I think it's from, you know, discussions we've had with Nick it's more to do with logistics and set up.

So if we're reducing, you know, the number of meetings that are happening over those four days and the number of rooms that are required, you know, because you're not going to have Constituency Day where the Board takes up, you know. So it will be - the venue will be a smaller requirement but it still should be able to hold the same amount of people.

Jonathan Robinson: Thanks. I saw Sebastian, I don't know if you want to sort of respond directly? Okay, Chuck, we'll go to you with a question then David were you in the line as well? So I've got Chuck, David, Sebastian.

Chuck Gomes: Chuck Gomes. Thanks, Jonathan. And thanks for all the work on this. It has been a long project but a lot of great thought has gone into it. But, Donna, I thought I heard you say that the public forum, later in the week, when they have them, is only going to be 90 minutes. Did I mis-hear? Have you been at the same ICANN meeting that I have over the last 15 years? How do you - and this isn't a criticism, I really want to understand how you think a public forum similar to what we know today could happen in 90 minutes?

Donna Austin: I also said that we acknowledge there might be some cultural shifting in our thinking that might need to take place as well, Chuck. So we appreciate that this was going to be, you know, one of the contentious things. We've allocated the same amount of time for public forum, it's just that we've moved, you know, one part of it to the front of the week and, you know, what we traditionally understand is, you know, public forum, we've shortened that timeframe at the end.

We didn't - to be fair we didn't go into - one of the reasons this took us so long is that you're trying to break down so many issues. So we tried to take the politics or the emotional (heat) out of some of these issues and tried to be practical about it. So I guess we're doing not completely from a clean slate but we're trying to work at how we can be more efficient in the time that we have during these meetings.

So obviously we welcome the feedback and, you know, we'll go through the same public comment period that any other process does. But, you know, we did try to kind of have a clean slate and take the emotion out of these things and come up with what we think is a practical suggestion.

Chuck Gomes: Thanks. I mean, it'll be interesting to watch.

Donna Austin: Yes.

Jonathan Robinson: I've got David, Sebastian and then come back to the microphone.

((Crosstalk))

(Tony): Do I speak now or...

Jonathan Robinson: Sorry, what we'll do is, (Tony), we'll do what we've done before, we'll go with David who was in the queue and then we'll alternate to the microphone. We'll do it that way.

(Tony): Okay.

Jonathan Robinson: So, David, go ahead.

David Cake: Okay. Yeah, I think it's my question is along the sort of same lines at Brett's. I really like the idea of having a meeting that's very focused on policy work. I'm not sure though why it will actually be smaller or less busy than the others

given that from the point of view of - well I'm not sure why it will be smaller because I guess I'm not sure why - I guess I'm not sure why - how we would discourage people that interested in the policy issue from coming.

And I'm also not sure why it would not be as busy for those of us who are doing policy work; we still have all the same thing we have to do. So, I mean, it seems like a good strategy in terms of reducing the need for large venues and so on. And I think it's a great strategy to have a meeting that is hopefully more focused on policy, I'm just - I'm not sure how that translates into actually a smaller meeting with more time to get things - for the policy to be able to get things done.

Jonathan Robinson: Would you like to respond, Michelle?

Michelle Chaplow: Thank you for the comment. Basically one of the things that I'd like to point out is when we actually analyzed how many people were in the sessions there's a lot less people - not in all of the sessions, I mean, as we all know there's some sessions that have standing room only. But the logistics of it and, you know, if you can take up these huge rooms for particular items it can work. You know, we've spent a lot of time with Nick looking at this and drawing out graphs, etcetera.

And, you know, even if there are more people arriving I think the capacity taking out some of these huge rooms for the larger meetings the logistics could still work. Thank you.

David Cake: I mean, I guess though but we still are going to presumably - we can't really - I mean, the meeting - I presume we're not going to say, well, let's try not to have any sessions on anything that people are too interested in and that's what drive the large rooms is a huge number of people being interested in, you know, gTLD program updates or whatever.

So - which and I presume we're still going to have those so...

Michelle Chaplow: The main philosophy behind these smaller meetings is so that basically the SOs and ACs can roll their sleeves up and get down, you know, to actually work. It's, you know, this is what was requested from the community and cross constituency work.

Jonathan Robinson: Okay, Tony.

(Tony): Yes, I find it very interesting. And a couple of things that come to mind is if my understanding is correct the smaller meeting, we could probably call it that, would be in the developing regions where you don't have so much infrastructure which means that, let's say in the case of Latin America and Africa at least when we do have a meeting in one of these regions the people who attend would not have the benefit of being part of a public forum. And that strikes me as a little surprising. I'm involved in the LAC Strategy Group and there is one for Africa and I think heard for some other region.

And we're supposed to be bringing more people from these regions into the ICANN process and hopefully to the ICANN meetings. Yet we're degrading the content of the events that will be held in these regions. So I do think this seems a little strange.

I think really that when you have a meeting in a developing region the challenge is really to get people from - particularly from that region to come participate and really if they come and they haven't been there before and all you've got is SO and AC meetings, I mean, where are they going to be fitting into this? That's my question. Thank you.

Michelle Chaplow: (Tony), thank you. Can I just reply to part of your question? It's not only - these smaller venues are not only available in Latin America and Africa, etcetera. I actually asked this same question that you're asking us to the group.

It could be a smaller venue in Europe; it could be a smaller venue in the States so it's not just, you know, it's not just for Africa or Latin America, it could be rotated around to other parts as well basically all of the regions. Thank you.

((Crosstalk))

Jonathan Robinson: I'm sorry, okay go ahead, Donna.

Donna Austin: Yeah, (Tony), just to add to that one of the realities for the meeting team now is that - and Nick went into quite a bit of detail with us on this is that there just aren't venues large enough in some of those regions to cater for a meeting of this size or this composition. So that's why we're looking for something for an alternative that would still allow ICANN to rotate through the regions.

And, you know, we understand that it's paired back but with the middle meeting there's also a single day that's dedicated to outreach so that you, you know, you actually have a dedicated day where you can bring in people from the region and, you know, educate them or raise awareness for what ICANN does and what's going on within the space.

So understanding that to get engaged in ICANN it is a rolling process. So if you get them to the first meeting in their region, which is smaller and a little bit easier to, you know, maybe get your head around, then maybe it's the better option than not being able to go there at all because the infrastructure simply doesn't exist for the way the meetings are set up at the moment.

Jonathan Robinson: Thanks, both. We're coming up to 10 past the hour and we need to call it a day very soon to go across to the GAC. I know I've got Sebastian, Maria and Volker so if we could - okay, Maria and let's go straight.

Maria Farrell: Okay thanks. Hi, Donna. Hello, Michelle, nice to meet you. Look, I actually did the read the report when it came out in February. I can put my nerd hat on

and say I did. Didn't put any comments in because I have to say I was kind of nonplussed by the whole thing.

My first response to it was what problem are we trying to solve? I'm not saying there aren't problems, God knows there are. These meetings are absolutely brutal. But, you know, what is the objective we're trying to achieve here?

And, you know, I know and I've talked to Nick Tomaso and I know that there's an ever-dwindling number of venues that we can have our meetings in. But is the sort of logical and - and the GAC, you know, wants to meet like it's the UN every time they meet.

But is the logical out-coming of that that we should say, you know, cut down and say not do policy for one of the meetings of the year, you know, have the third meeting of the year be focused basically on broadcast mode on, you know, talking about the good things that ICANN does.

I don't think that's the answer. You know, when you look at the middle meeting, which is the four-day meeting, and that is focused on SO AC policy, right now we do four days of absolutely jammed calendar-packed, you know, policy of every meeting.

In the GNSO we do two full days at the weekend, we do a full day of constituency meetings and then we do two half days on Wednesday and Thursday of full meetings and that's not talking about going to any workshop, doing any other cross constituency or cross community interaction. So just on the policy alone right now we do four days.

And so I see this happening in an environment where we have got more and more and more public comments to respond to, more and more issues on the table and, you know, where the community is having a big problem just keeping up.

And to then say we're going to go and cut down on the opportunities to meet to do policy and to do the actual stuff that this organization does. I just, you know, and I hate to be the person in the room saying I don't like this idea because it's different.

But I don't like this idea because I don't think it's really taking at the heart of it the actual stuff we're here to do and that is to make policy for the Internet, you know, not doing outreach and, you know, all of these good things are really important for the fundamental is we're here to make policy and develop consensus.

And so we can't just stop doing that. You know, so that's - I guess I do - I probably should put in the comments on this but that's - those are my initial thoughts when I read the report.

Michelle Chaplow: Maria, you've made some very good points there. And I think we would really appreciate it if you actually responded and then we can actually deal with it on the working group. Thank you very much.

Jonathan Robinson: Thanks, Maria. Volker, over to you for - I've got Jean-Christophe. Jean-Christophe, we will go with Volker and you and then we really do need to call it a day so let's here from you, Volker...

((Crosstalk))

Volker Greimann: Okay. I'm Volker Greimann and you can also count me among the non-responding skeptics. You know, we as GNSO councilors probably have the most long ICANN meetings of all participants; we participate not only in the GNSO sessions but many of us - most of us participate in working groups and we would like to have those face to face meetings continue besides our GNSO meetings.

I also hold the three meetings that we have face to face per year as very important to be able to do the job right. Just because not everything can be communicated by email or teleconference as well as it can be at the bar or in snacks by the table discussing on the corridors these informal times are, I think, essential to the working of the multistakeholder model. It's not only the official part that's important, it's the unofficial part and cutting down on that is risky.

On the other hand I don't think that the longer meeting makes up for the loss that the short meeting poses because not everyone will be able to devote that long a time to attending an ICANN meeting. We all have day jobs; this is not our main occupation - well most of us. And taking that time away from your job the longer it becomes the harder it gets so you must remember that we're all volunteers here. And the long meeting might, for many people, be beyond what they're willing to invest or able to invest in time.

Donna Austin: So I think just to respond - and we fully acknowledge that this is a little bit different. But just to kind of where we kind of came from and to put this into perspective we could do nothing so come up with a report that says status quo, let's not change anything. Or we could come out with something that generated some conversation and tried to get some feedback.

Now I think, Maria, to your point just to kind of get a sense of where we're coming from, I think if you have a look at the guiding principles that took us about 9 months to come up with because we went, you know, we spent a hell of a lot of time talking about these things.

And to pare it back and try to get an idea of what was really important we have our guiding principles do actually speak to most of the things that you've raised. So we've tried to come up with, you know, a set of meetings that hits all the points that we thought were important to the community because the reality is that these meetings mean different things to different people and the different constituencies and the growing constituencies.

So, you know, we've tried to take everything into account so our options were status quo or let's throw something new out there for people to consider.

Jonathan Robinson: So, everyone, I have a bit of a problem that I'm aware of now that we had understood from the paper in front of me and from the scheduling that I've seen that we were supposed to be meeting the GAC at 3:30; their schedule and their understanding is we were supposed to be there at 3:00 so we are late in that sense.

So, Jean-Christophe, I'm sorry, I know you've been patient.

Jean-Christophe Nothias: No problem, I'll give away my time.

((Crosstalk))

Jonathan Robinson: Thank you very much. So we need to pack up and move across there right away.

Jean-Christophe Nothias: I know I just wanted to thank you the member of the GNSO who participate to this working group. And really what it struck me that we came with different scenarios and we end up with one the multistakeholder group - working group came with one single scenario with a large (unintelligible) and just take that into account that we tried to get all your inputs already but that's good to have your feedback now and we will try to do the best to have a final report taking that into account. And thank you for your work.

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