

GAC Liaison Report: ICANN81 Plenary Session Proposal and Kigali Communiqué Follow-Up

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Introduction:

The following report outlines the next steps following the GAC Kigali Communiqué and provides an in-depth update on the actions and developments stemming from the Kigali meeting. The report highlights key issues that impact the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, including geopolitical influences and emerging Internet infrastructures. It also provides a comprehensive overview of the steps we will take to address these critical matters to support our agreed-upon community priorities.

The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) convened in Kigali, Rwanda, from June 10 to 13, 2024, for the ICANN80 Policy Forum. The Kigali Communiqué, drafted during this meeting, was shared with GAC Members and Observers for review, with no objections raised prior to publication. Its full text can be found here: https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann80-kigali-communication?language_id=1

Meeting Highlights:

1. High-Level Government Meeting:

- Held on June 9, 2024, the GAC expressed gratitude to Rwanda for hosting the meeting, which was attended by 81 delegations, including intergovernmental organizations. The session focused on the multi-stakeholder model, cooperation between policymakers and the technical community, and efforts to enhance digital inclusion and connectivity.

2. Inter-Constituency Engagement:

- The GAC engaged in discussions with various ICANN bodies, including the ICANN Board, ALAC, and GNSO, covering topics such as new gTLDs, DNS resiliency, and public interest commitments. These discussions also addressed cross-community sessions on Internet governance and regional challenges.

3. Internal Matters:

- New GAC members from Liechtenstein were welcomed, and preparations for GAC elections for Chair and Vice-Chairs were outlined. The GAC also acknowledged leadership changes within its working groups and discussed their ongoing efforts in areas like DNS abuse and capacity development.

4. Key Issues and Future Work:

- The GAC highlighted the importance of transparency in GNSO Statements of Interest, raised concerns about content restriction in new gTLDs, and emphasized the need for clear guidance on Registry Voluntary Commitments. Additionally, the GAC stressed the need for improved mechanisms to address DNS abuse and support for DNSSEC adoption. The committee also called for enhanced efforts to promote the Registration Data Request Service and accurate domain registration data.

GAC Advice

The Governmental Advisory Committee issued several consensus advices to the ICANN Board, addressing two primary issues: the Applicant Support Program (ASP) and the resolution of contention sets in new gTLDs.

1. Applicant Support Program (ASP):

- The GAC advises that final decisions on ASP applications should be made at the end of the twelve-month application period to avoid disadvantaging later applicants, particularly those from underserved regions.

- It recommends involving community experts in the evaluation process and initiating a dialogue with the GNSO and ALAC to explore potential platforms for new gTLDs supported by ASP to operate their own back-end services.

- Additionally, the GAC seeks a detailed report on the ASP's Engagement and Outreach Plan, including specific timelines and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), to track progress and make adjustments as needed.

2. Resolution of Contention Sets:

- The GAC advises prohibiting private auctions for resolving contention sets in the next round of new gTLDs and urges the Board to start a focused community discussion to find alternatives before proceeding with any potentially inconsistent actions with previous advice.

The GAC also follows up on earlier advice regarding ASP communications and outreach strategies, requesting detailed plans and budgetary information by mid-Q3 2024, and emphasizes the need for prompt action on urgent requests for domain registration data to address public safety concerns. The next GAC meeting is scheduled for ICANN81 in November 2024.

The GAC Strategic Plan for 2024-2028, endorsed on June 17, 2024, outlines key objectives to enhance its role and impact within ICANN. The GAC's mission is to provide public policy advice on Internet stability, security, and global interconnectedness, ensuring ICANN Board accountability. Its vision is to maintain the Internet's unique identifier systems as a reliable foundation for the global digital ecosystem. The GAC upholds values of transparency, multistakeholder governance, global policy consideration, stability, security, and respect for human rights and international law.

The strategic objectives are:

1. Role for Governments in ICANN: Reinforce the role of governments within ICANN's multistakeholder model and evaluate if existing structures adequately support GAC's policy development and influence.

2. Effectiveness of the GAC: Enhance participation and effectiveness of GAC members in ICANN processes and ensure their views are well-represented.

3. Future Rounds of New gTLDs: Ensure future gTLD rounds promote competition, address the digital divide, include necessary safeguards, and allow GAC to address global public interest issues.

4. DNS Abuse: Proactively address DNS abuse, promote security and stability, and collaborate on best practices for mitigating phishing, malware, and spam.

5. Domain Registration Data: Support accurate and accessible domain registration data while respecting privacy frameworks.

6. Universal Acceptance: Promote a multilingual Internet and ensure domain names and email addresses are universally accessible.

7. Impact of New Technology: Understand and address challenges posed by new technologies on unique identifier systems.

8. Internet Governance: Keep stakeholders informed of Internet governance developments and contribute to global processes.

9. Internet Number Resources: Update and coordinate on policies related to Internet number resources.

Issues of Interest to the At-Large Community

1. Applicant Support Program (ASP)

- Timing and Evaluation: The GAC advises that decisions on ASP applications should be made at the end of the twelve-month application period rather than on a first-come, first-served basis. This approach is aimed at ensuring that underserved regions, which may take longer to prepare their applications, are not disadvantaged.

- Community Involvement: The GAC recommends inviting community members with relevant expertise to participate in the ASP application evaluation process, reflecting its commitment to inclusivity and expert oversight.

- Platform Development: The GAC suggests exploring the feasibility of leveraging or contracting a platform for new gTLDs supported through the ASP to operate their own back-end services, involving a facilitated dialogue with GNSO and ALAC representatives.

- Engagement and Outreach: The GAC emphasizes the need for a detailed report on the ASP's Engagement and Outreach Plan, including a campaign launch and stakeholder consultations by June 2024.

2. DNS Abuse

- Mitigation and Prevention: The GAC is focused on reducing DNS abuse, such as phishing and malware, by promoting security and resilience in the DNS. This involves supporting best practices and concrete measures for abuse prevention and offering capacity-building workshops for GAC members.

3. Domain Registration Data

- Accuracy and Accessibility: The GAC is concerned with maintaining the accessibility and accuracy of domain registration data while complying with privacy regulations. It advocates for clear and meaningful data access to enhance transparency and accountability in domain registration processes.

4. Universal Acceptance

- Multilingual Internet: The GAC supports efforts to ensure that all domain names and email addresses, including new Top-Level Domains and Internationalized Domain Names, are universally accepted and function across all Internet-enabled applications and systems.

5. Internet Governance

- Global Processes: The GAC will ensure that governments and ICANN stakeholders stay informed about global Internet governance developments affecting the Internet's unique identifier systems and may contribute to global governance processes.

ICANN81 Plenary Session Proposal: Overview and Key Details

The following session was proposed and met with GAC leadership support. It is designed to address critical issues concerning the impact of geopolitical factors on the multistakeholder model of internet governance and explore the implications of new internet infrastructures.

Session Title: Shifting Paradigms: Multistakeholderism, Geopolitics, International Law, and New Internet Infrastructures

Duration: 90 minutes

Session Type: Whole Community Session (Joint ALAC/GAC Session)

Purpose and Focus:

This plenary session at ICANN81 aims to offer a look into how geopolitical dynamics are reshaping the multistakeholder model and influencing the governance of emerging internet infrastructures. The discussion will also address the evolving regulatory frameworks relevant to these new technologies.

Key Discussion Topics:

1. Geopolitics and Multistakeholderism: The session will explore the impact of geopolitical tensions on global internet governance and infrastructure.
2. New Internet Infrastructures: Topics will include advancements such as outer space internet and interplanetary communication, and their implications for policy and governance.
3. Regulatory Frameworks: The session will analyze how existing regulations like the 2024 U.S. International Cyberspace & Digital Policy Strategy, GDPR, the AI Act, and NIS2 address the challenges posed by new internet technologies.

Confirmed Participants:

- Jorge Cancio, Deputy Head of the International Relations Team at OFCOM and GAC Switzerland representative, has confirmed his participation, bringing valuable insights into the geopolitical aspects of internet governance.

- GAC Leadership has expressed strong support for this session, aligning it with the committee's strategic priorities and current concerns.

Session Structure:

1. Introduction by Moderator (5 minutes): Overview of objectives and introduction of speakers.
2. Speaker Presentations (10 minutes each): Contributions from Vint Cerf, Leon Sanchez, Susan Chalmers, Berna Akçalı Gür, and John Crain.
3. Discussion Segment (20 minutes): Open dialogue on questions regarding the evolution of the multistakeholder model, governance challenges, and regulatory frameworks.
4. Conclusion (5 minutes): Summary of key points and final remarks.

Expected Outcomes:

- A detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to new internet infrastructures.
- Insights into how existing regulatory frameworks can adapt to emerging technologies.
- Enhanced dialogue among stakeholders on the future of multistakeholder internet governance.

Target Audience:

The session is targeted at end users, policymakers, regulators, technologists, and legal experts, focusing on the impact of infrastructure governance on the broader internet community.

This session is anticipated to provide critical perspectives and facilitate significant discussions on evolving internet governance issues. Updates to the session agenda and format can be found here: [Shifting Paradigms: Multistakeholderism, Geopolitics, International Law, and New Internet Infrastructures](#)