

**SOAC CHAIRS' ROUNDTABLE – 29 SEPTEMBER 2023
SUMMARY NOTES**

Attendance:

Community Leaders – Herve Clement (ASO); Biyi Olapido, Alejandra Reynoso (ccNSO); Gregory De Biase, Sebastien Ducos, John McElwaine (GNSO); Joanna Kulesza (ALAC); Nicolas Caballero, Nigel Hickson (GAC); Ken Renard (RSSAC); Rod Rasmussen, Julie Hammer (SSAC)

ICANN Org – David Olive, Theresa Swinehart, Xavier Calvez, Sally Newell Cohen, Roberto Pena and staff members from the Global Meetings, Implementation Operations, Planning, Policy Development Support and Reviews, Support & Accountability teams.

ICANN Board – Tripti Sinha

ACTION ITEMS
1. SOAC leaders to circulate the materials provided by ICANN org on a Continuous Improvement Program and a proposed Process for Retiring Non-Policy Recommendations to their members
2. SOAC community groups to provide their feedback on these materials by end-October 2023
3. SOAC leaders to inform their members about the Five-Year Strategic Planning Process and encourage attendance and participation at one of the planned Environmental Scan sessions
4. ICANN org to propose a transparent mechanism for collecting and sharing the community feedback received
5. SOAC leaders to share information and link for community stories about ICANN's 25th anniversary with their members: https://circleid.com/posts/20230928-icann-celebrates-quarter-century-milestone
6. SOAC leaders to collect and provide their groups' topics or questions for their bilateral meetings with the Board at ICANN78, in order of priority, by 11 October 2023

Topic 1: Update from the Board Chair

Tripti Sinha welcomed the SOAC Chairs and provided an update on the recent Board workshop in Istanbul and key events and decisions taken by the Board. She spoke about the Board's preparations for the next Five-Year Strategic Plan, which is ICANN's foundational document and a roadmap for the future. The Board discussed the newly launched Registration Data Request Service, outcomes from the Cross-Community Working Group on Auction Proceeds, issues relating to mitigation of DNS abuse (including the recent amendments to ICANN's contracts with registry operators and registrars), and the creation of an environmental sustainability strategy for ICANN (which is also one of the new CEO goals for this fiscal year). The Board also received a briefing from the Board's search committee for a new CEO and welcomed two new incoming Board members.

At its September meeting, the Board took action on several community-developed policy recommendations for the next round of new gTLDs and established a sub-committee to handle potential Board member conflicts relating to the next round. The Board also acted on various items from the GAC's consensus advice regarding the next round as well as several recommendations from the last Nominating Committee Review, set up a search committee to seek out the next Ombudsman, and appointed ICANN org's current Complaints Officer as the interim Ombudsman.

The new Board-approved CEO goals have now been published and the latest Annual Report should be published on the ICANN website shortly. Tripti also highlighted the Board's preparations for the upcoming Annual General Meeting at ICANN78; in particular, the Board's efforts to improve its interactions with the community, including focusing on more targeted topics and more informal dialogue. The Board is now looking at additional ways to further enhance its bilateral meetings with all community groups, including possibly holding a Prep Week webinar where different Board members can lead breakout sessions on specific topics.

Tripti asked that ***all SOAC groups review the Board's question to the community for ICANN78 and provide their questions for the Board to the Board Operations staff team by 11 October 2023.***

Topic 2: Update on ICANN78 Planning

Tanzanica King noted that ICANN78 will likely see over 220 sessions, while Prep Week will host 12 sessions. The full meeting schedule will be published on Monday 2 October.

Sally Newell Cohen highlighted several milestones that we are celebrating as a community. In addition to ICANN's 25th anniversary, October will also be the seventh anniversary of the IANA stewardship transition and the tenth year since the delegation of the first Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) gTLDs in the 2012 New gTLD Program.

ICANN org will be distributing commemorative pins at ICANN78 and there will be several commemorative sessions during the meeting, including a panel moderated by interim CEO Sally Costerton immediately following the Welcome Ceremony. There will be opportunities for community members to share their memories and highlights, both during that session and through video opportunities. ICANN org has also partnered with Circle ID to create a space for the community to share their stories and experiences: <https://circleid.com/posts/20230928-icann-celebrates-quarter-century-milestone>. There will be a celebratory community reception on Wednesday 25 October as well.

Topic 3: ICANN Org Updates

I. Implementing ATRT3 Recommendation 3.6: Evolving Organizational Reviews into a Continuous Improvement Program (presenter: ICANN org's Reviews, Support & Accountability (RSA) Staff Team)

Larisa Gurnick updated attendees on ICANN org's preparations to implement the ATRT3 recommendation relating to a Continuous Improvement Pilot (CIP) to replace the current Organizational Reviews. Noting that the community agreed to defer the next round of Organizational Reviews for the moment, the Board plans to revisit that decision in June 2025. The staff team understands the need to keep the CIP process lightweight and is proposing that a community coordination group consisting of representatives from each SO and AC be formed, to assist with the development of the CIP framework.

The RSA team estimates that the work will take up to 12 months, beginning after ICANN78. Please refer to the materials circulated for this Roundtable for further details about the CIP framework and the proposed roles and responsibilities of the community coordination group.

Larisa asked that ***each community group review the proposal and provide any feedback to the team as soon as feasible, if possible, by ICANN78.*** The team will also be available to meet with interested community groups at ICANN78.

At ICANN78, the ccNSO will be organizing an open session on the CIP. **All community groups and members are invited to attend the ccNSO session.** In addition, the ALAC and GAC will be discussing a joint statement on enabling inclusive, informed, and meaningful participation in ICANN.

II. Implementing ATRT3 Recommendation 5: A Proposed Process for Retiring Community-Developed Non-Policy Recommendations (presenter: ICANN org’s Implementation Operations Staff Team)

Giovanni Seppia provided an overview of the relevant ATRT3 recommendation, and the process being proposed to address it. He noted the intention to only use this process in exceptional circumstances and described the steps and proposed criteria that could apply in considering whether to retire non-policy recommendations developed by the community (e.g., an environmental change, lack of relevancy and subsequent developments superseding the need for the recommendation, significant implementation costs outweighing the benefits the recommendation is intended to achieve, an unduly extended time frame, and lack of community support to proceed with implementation).

Please refer to the materials for further details about the proposed retirement process.

The SOAC leaders noted that some of the criteria may need to be refined; in particular, on time and other implementation-related concerns. They sought clarification that the proposed process will not apply to advice issued by the Advisory Committees. Giovanni confirmed that the scope of the recommendation and thus the proposal is intended to apply only to non-policy recommendations. The community could, of course, decide in the future that a similar process could also be applicable to policy recommendations, including advice.

One participant commented that it may become necessary for the SOACs to designate their work outcomes (including advice) as “policy” or “non-policy”. There is no current practice on this distinction. David Olive confirmed that advice from the ACs will continue to be handled through the current Action Request Register process.

Xavier Calvez noted that it will be helpful to improve our ability to track the time and resources needed to implement recommendations. One participant commented that the question of implementation “impact” does not necessarily just mean ICANN’s budget, but also includes financial and non-financial impact on other actors within the ICANN ecosystem, from Contracted Parties and registrants to DNS infrastructure providers and more.

Giovanni requested that the **SOAC groups provide feedback on the proposed process and criteria by the end of October 2023**, following ICANN78. The Implementation Operations team will also be available to meet with interested community groups at ICANN78.

III. Developing the Next Five-Year Strategic Plan (presenter: ICANN org’s Planning Staff Team)

Becky Nash provided an overview of the five-year strategic planning process and described the team’s proposed approach for working with the Board and community to develop the FY26-30 Strategic Plan. The process will include several “environmental scan” sessions that the community is invited to participate in.

Becky emphasized the importance of active and inclusive community participation in each step of the process. As such, the Planning Team has designed specific opportunities and a timeline for community

participation in the strategic planning process, in addition to several Public Comment proceedings. The aim is for a draft Strategic Plan to be finalized by March 2025, to allow for Empowered Community consideration and a final plan to be in place by end-June 2025.

Please refer to the materials for further details on the process and scope of the work.

The community-oriented environmental scan sessions will take place on 5 October (virtual), 24 October (hybrid at ICANN78), and 19 November (virtual). All community members are invited and encouraged to attend one of these sessions to provide their input.

Topic 4: Introduction to ICANN Org’s Economist Function (Xavier Calvez & Roberto Pena)

Roberto Pena provided an overview of his role, which is situated within the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and involves working closely with the Planning team, amongst other functions.

Please refer to the materials for Roberto’s presentation and further details.

Any Other Business

David Olive noted that the next Roundtable will be held on Friday 19 October, the day before the start of ICANN78.

One participant requested that the community feedback on the materials circulated for this Roundtable be gathered, published, and shared in a transparent and timely fashion. David Olive agreed that this will be helpful.
