

SOAC CHAIRS' CALL WITH ICANN ORG CEO & ICANN BOARD CHAIR – 23 SEPTEMBER 2020 SUMMARY NOTES

Attendance:

Community Leaders – Kevin Blumberg (ASO); Katrina Sataki (ccNSO); Keith Drazek (GNSO); Maureen Hilyard (ALAC); Olga Cavalli (GAC); Fred Baker, Brad Verd (RSSAC); Rod Rasmussen (SSAC)

ICANN Org – Goran Marby, Theresa Swinehart, Xavier Calvez, Sally Newell Cohen, Karen Lentz, Nick Tomasso, Negar Farzinnia, Tanzania King, Mary Wong & ICANN Policy Development Support staff

ICANN Board – Maarten Botterman, Leon Felipe Sanchez Ambia

Action Items:

For Topic #1:

- ICANN org to prepare and circulate the survey to all community leaders (including GNSO Stakeholder Group and Constituency chairs and RALO chairs)
- ICANN org to publish blog post outlining the process and timeline for the community, including the proposed Board-community engagement session at ICANN69
- SOAC Chairs to send suggestions for survey questions to Mary Wong as soon as possible
- SOAC Chairs to inform their community groups about the proposed survey and the ICANN69 engagement session with the ICANN Board
- SOAC Chairs to gather feedback from their respective communities on the survey

For Topic #2:

- ICANN org to address question about timing and a possible parallel track for the proposed new Operational Design Phase in finalizing the discussion paper
- ICANN org to circulate proposal for the new Operational Design Phase to the SOAC Chairs and community
- ICANN Org to publish paper on the overall gTLD policy process (from initiation/launch to design and implementation) for community consultation following initial feedback on the proposed new Operational Design Phase

For Topic #3:

- ICANN org to circulate paper for community feedback as to whether the paper accurately describes the roles and responsibilities of the Board, org and community

Welcome & Introductory Remarks:

The ICANN CEO and Board Chair thanked the SOAC leaders for joining this second pre-ICANN69 call. These calls are useful for getting the sense of the community on important and timely topics.

Discussion Topic #1: ICANN Virtual Meetings

The paper that was circulated yesterday outlines a proposed process that is meant to assist the Board in determining practical ways of moving forward with meetings that continue to support the community's work, especially in a virtual environment. The discussion is not about revising or replacing the overall ICANN meetings strategy at this time.

There will be a Board-community discussion at ICANN69 on this topic. It is critical that the Board hears from all parts of the community.

There was general agreement that a survey to gather community feedback can be a useful first step in the discussion. The leaders agreed that the survey should include the chairs of the GNSO Stakeholder Groups, GNSO Constituencies and then five Regional At Large Organizations, as it is important to get input from all regions and from the full breadth of the community, some of which may have different needs. The survey may show agreement on a number of ideas but possibly also differences of opinion.

Several community groups have been discussing the possibility that travel will be difficult or unwise into next year. It may therefore be more realistic to focus on improving the virtual meetings rather than ask when we can return to face-to-face meetings. In this regard, a few participants thought that looking at a 12 to 18-month time frame is appropriate. One participant commented that their group has raised the possibility of not doing a thrice-yearly ICANN meeting. Another participant noted that even when it will be possible to conduct a face-to-face meeting, many parts of the community may still need “ramp up” time to prepare for it.

Some participants agreed that a survey is only useful insofar as the questions are clearly drafted to address the objective. It may be helpful to include some “strawman” questions and options for open-ended suggestions. The survey can also build on feedback that had been provided during prior discussions about virtual meeting support.

ICANN org will be publishing a blog post to inform the community about the process and timeline for the community discussions and survey.

Discussion Topic #2: Proposed Community Consultation on gTLD Policy Process, including a Proposed New Operational Design Phase

Based on recent discussions between ICANN org and the GNSO over the scale and resource impact of potential new gTLD policy recommendations, it is likely that the Board and the community will find it helpful to fully understand the operational issues around large-scale policy implementation, prior to the Board adopting new policies. Having such information available before Board action can also assist ICANN’s Advisory Committees if they wish to provide input on implementation issues as part of any advice to the Board.

ICANN org is finalizing a paper that outlines the existing policy process, from initiation and development through to implementation. In addition, ICANN org plans to request community feedback on a proposed new Operational Design phase. ICANN org plans to circulate a paper on this proposal for community feedback shortly, and will launch a community consultation on all stages of the gTLD policy process, building on initial feedback on this proposal.

There was general agreement that obtaining operational information before Board action will be beneficial. It is not foreseen that the design phase will be necessary for all implementation efforts, only those that are likely to be extremely complex or costly. Several participants noted that a number of questions need to be addressed in developing the new Operational Design phase. For example, if the design phase results in a need to amend the policy recommendations, this should be referred back to the GNSO Council and not be a unilateral decision taken by ICANN org or the Board.

Adding such a phase between a GNSO Council vote and a Board decision could also add substantial time to the period before the Board can act. It may be helpful to investigate the possibility of commencing the design phase even before the GNSO Council votes on the policy recommendations. Alternatively, it may be possible to conduct the design work in parallel with at least the latter stages of the Policy Development Process. While this may add some time “up front”, it could result in time saving down the road.

A suggestion was made that the ARIN model could be useful in this regard. In ARIN’s process, once proposed policies reach a stage where they seem ready for adoption, staff and Legal prepare a report on the potential impact, including likely costs. The review is shared with the community prior to finalization of the policy recommendations, to allow for a fuller understanding of what it will take to implement as well as course correction, if necessary.

Topic #3: Principles for Implementation of Reviews, Cross Community Working Groups and Other Non-Policy Recommendations Developed by the Community

ICANN org is preparing a paper that will be circulated to the community, describing the different roles and responsibilities of the Board, org and community in implementing community-developed recommendations from Reviews, CCWGs and other non-policy efforts. The purpose of the paper is to ensure that the Board, org and community are in agreement about these roles and responsibilities, which will be set forth in a list of proposed principles.

Closing Comments:

The ICANN CEO thanked all attendees for their time. The group will reconvene after ICANN69.
