

ICANN Open Forum

Background Paper

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is a global, not-for-profit organization that coordinates, at the overall level, the Internet's systems of unique identifiers. In more technical terms, ICANN has responsibility for Internet Protocol (IP) address space allocation, protocol identifier assignment, generic (gTLD) and country code (ccTLD) Top-Level Domain name system management, and root server system management functions. In its stewardship of these global resources, ICANN's mandate is to ensure the operational security and stability of one single Internet; to promote competition in the registration of domain names; to develop policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes; and to achieve broad representation of global Internet stakeholders.

The purpose of this Open Forum is to update participants on the progress that ICANN has made in its various processes since the last IGF. Topics that can be discussed this year may include:

1. ICANN five-year strategic plan (2016-2020);
2. ICANN Strategy Panels;
3. Affirmation of Commitments (AoC);
4. New gTLD program; and
5. Regional strategies and ongoing globalization efforts.

1. ICANN five-year strategic plan (2016-2020)

This five-year strategic plan was created in accordance with ICANN's commitment to the multi-stakeholder approach. Beginning in April 2013, ICANN sought and incorporated extensive community input. Over the fourteen-month process, related initiatives such as the Affirmation of Commitments Reviews, the Regional Engagement Strategies, and Strategy Panels informed the Plan. The recently published 2016-2020 draft plan included five focus areas as strategic objectives and goals:

- Evolve and further internationalize and regionalize ICANN's implementation of the multi-stakeholder approach;
- Continue to support a healthy, stable, and resilient unique identifier ecosystem;
- Advance technical and operational excellence;
- Clarify and establish ICANN's role in the Internet governance ecosystem;
- Develop and implement a global public responsibility framework.

2. ICANN Strategy Panels

More than 40 diverse practitioners, subject matter experts and thought leaders have been working together since October 2013 as members of the ICANN Strategy Panels to support development of ICANN's strategic and operational future.

Strategy Panels are advisory in nature and report to the ICANN President and CEO. Their quintessential objective is to inform and support ICANN's planning process. As highlighted at the opening ceremony at ICANN's public meeting Durban (July 2013), the Strategy Panels' work and output is designed to be informative and will not go straight to implementation.

Each of the four panels has published its draft recommendations. The recommendations are varied and wide-reaching, from partnering in a study to define an architectural vision for DNS in 2020 to organizing participants by topic rather than constituency groups to adapting ICANN's cultural to a multi-lingual and multi-cultural one.

3. Affirmation of Commitments (AoC)

Three important milestones in the advancement of ICANN's accountability and transparency are implementation of the:

- Affirmation of Commitments (AoC) – the 2009 agreement that reaffirmed ICANN's independence, and ICANN's commitment to accountability and transparency, DNS security and stability, competition and consumer choice, international participation, periodic community reviews, and related activities;
- AoC Reviews – periodic community review of four key objectives are required under the AoC to assess and report on ICANN's progress toward 1) ensuring accountability, transparency, 2) preserving security, stability and resiliency of the DNS, 3) promoting competition, consumer trust and consumer choice, and 4) WHOIS policy; and
- Accountability and Transparency Review (ATRT):
 - ATRT 1 – The first review completed under the AoC contained 27 recommendations to enhance activities throughout ICANN, including the governance and performance of the Board, the role and effectiveness of the Governmental Advisory Committee, public input and public policy processes, and review mechanisms for Board decisions. All recommendations were accepted by the ICANN Board and directed to be implemented.
 - ATRT 2 – The second ATRT review was completed, posted for public comment in January 2014 and is being considered by ICANN's Board.

4. New gTLD program

ICANN community has developed the new gTLD program over seven years, seeking to increase consumer choice, stimulate competition, empower innovation and generate more cultural diversity and new business opportunities around the world.

Of the 1,930 applications received in 2012, 1,749 passed evaluation, 620 are pending contention resolution, 177 withdrawn, and 4 rejected. Today there are 256 new gTLD strings delegated into the root in scripts such as Arabic, Chinese, and Cyrillic. Many mechanisms and safeguards have been established to protect legal rights and ensure security and stability of the DNS.

5. Regional strategies and ongoing globalization efforts

ICANN staff have collaborated with community members from governments, private sector, civil society, technical and academic community in Africa, Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and worked together to develop three-year regional strategies aimed at increasing engagement in ICANN's processes.

References

Draft five-year strategic plan (2016-2020):

<http://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/draft-strategic-plan-2016-2020-10apr14-en.pdf>

Strategy Panels' draft reports: <https://new.icann.org/news/announcement-2-2014-02-25-en>

ICANN Accountability and Transparency:

<https://new.icann.org/resources/pages/accountability-2012-02-25-en>

New gTLD Program: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/>

ICANN 2013 annual report: <http://www.icann.org/en/about/annual-report/annual-report-2013-en.pdf>