
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – At-Large Finance and Budget Working Group
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YESIM SAGLAM

Hello and welcome to the At-Large Operations, Finance and Budget Working Group Session. My name is Yesim for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. Interpretation for this session will include English, French and Spanish. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom and when called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom.

On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English and speak at a reasonable pace. I will now hand the floor over to Bukola Oronti and Claire Craig -- OFB working group call.

BUKOLA ORONTI

Hello, everyone. This is Bukola Oronti. Thank you, Yesim, and thank you to everyone for attending today's call, and once again on behalf of myself and Claire, we welcome you to the OFB meeting in

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Mumbai. Even though we are joining remotely, we believe it's going on well and everyone is having a great time over there.

So, I'll go through the agenda now and we've gone through the staff introduction and the welcome, and next will be the Aim of the Session, and then we'll move on to the Annual Strategy Review Program, Environmental Scan by the ICANN planning team and next after that, next slide please.

Okay, so move on to the Implementation of ALAC FY26 Strategic Priorities, and then with that we'll be going through the ALAC FY26 Strategic Priorities and Core Activities. We'll be looking at the ALAC CIP Timeline and Charts. We'll be looking at the At-Large Capacity Building Initiatives and the Next Steps, and with that we'll be concluding today's meeting.

So, here is the agenda as presented. Do we have any comments to the agenda? I'm seeing none and I'm not seeing any hand raised. So we take it as adopted. So, thank you everyone, and yes, within Aim of the Session, this meeting is we'll be looking at the Annual Strategy Review and every other thing as mentioned in the agenda, and the aim is to give us an update and also to plan for the Next Steps as we move on in the year FY26.

And with that, I move on to the next item, which is the Annual Strategy Review Program, the Environmental Scan, and I'll turn it over to Becky Nash and her team to handle that part. So, over to you Becky. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much, Bukola, and hello, everyone. This is Becky Nash from the ICANN Org planning team and I'm joined here in the room with my colleague, Victoria Yang, and we are here to kick off the Annual Strategy Review Program with the step of the Environmental Scan.

So, we have a couple of slides that we're just going to introduce the topic and then run a session called an Environmental Scan. Great. Thank you very much team for the slides. So, if we could go to the next slide. So, what is the goal of this session? The goal is to have an open dialogue in order to surface insights, identify challenges and their assumptions and identify areas that may require a deeper discussion and follow up.

The session is not intended to discuss revisions to the current Strategic Plan or resolve problems, but what we are doing is evaluating whether or not there are any emerging trends or topics that would be appropriate to bring to the attention of the ICANN Board as it pertains to the current adopted Strategic Plan for FY26-30.

So, just as a way of introduction to this session, we are asking that we all stay at the strategic level, not the operational level. And what does that mean? That means that currently we have a strategy for all of ICANN that was developed with consultations

with the community and it runs from FY26 through FY30 where we have a collective vision for ICANN for 2030.

So, rather than look at our actual progress to date or detailed tactics or operating plan details, we're asking about strategies that we should be emerging trends related to strategies that we should be aware of. So, we just ask that everyone speak up, provide their experience, use examples as much as possible. All comments are welcome. We're taking notes and using this as input from this community stakeholder group.

We also just suggest that we all make space for different perspectives. We all may be looking at our strategies from a different point of view and or emerging trends or hot topics from a different point of view. And really the focus here is on strategic implications from a long-term horizon standpoint. So, again, in the future. And this is an ordinary step in strategic planning to take a pulse on what is being talked about as the future emerging trends.

So, if we go to the next slide, as part of the materials for this session today, we provided both an instructions document and then a briefing document which outlined our current Strategic Plan along with several topics of just external environmental trends or assumptions that we are using as a starting point. Again, we are going to cover five topics but there's also another.

So, I just want to be clear that we are inviting all perspectives and any topics of emerging trends that ICANN overall should be monitoring and thinking about any impact on our Strategic Plan.

So, the first environmental trend is based on technological developments, security, and trust in the internet's Unique Identifier systems. So, the food for thought of the trend here is that the Unique Identifier systems continue to be influenced or impacted by technological developments.

So, on the one hand, some technological advancements may present opportunities to strengthen the security and resilience of the Unique Identifier systems. But on the other hand, some may fragment trust or become a challenge and challenge the universality of the Unique Identifier systems.

So, this is a key trend that we are asking the group here to provide their observations or any experience or comments about this as an emerging trend. So, we will open up the floor and the microphone for everyone online and in the room to give us any perspective about technological developments, security, and trust in the Unique Identifier systems.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Any questions?

HEIDI ULLRICH

Yesim. We can't see the question in the Q&A pod. Are you able to read that from Olivier?

YESIM SAGLAM

Yes, of course. This is Yesim speaking from ICANN. We have received a question from Olivier Crepin-Leblond. The question is, here is my question for Becky Nash from the previous session. Thank you for providing interesting statistics relating to the volume and nature of responses received in relation to the ICANN fiscal year 2027 to 2031 Operating and Financial Plan and the ICANN IANA Fiscal Year 2027 Operation Plans and Budgets.

Sorry, I'm not seeing the rest of the question. Sorry, Olivier, if you're online, I see your hand is up. If you would like to take the question online, I'm not seeing the rest of the question. I'm sorry, in the Q&A pod.

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND

Yes, thank you very much. Olivier Crepin-Leblond speaking. I didn't want to put some sound in the works. It was just a question for later when there is going or if there is time. It was relating to the IANA plan and budget and I pressed return before formulating the question. So, please ignore for the time being and continue with what you're doing. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

May I respond? Okay, thank you very much, Olivier. And of course, we are available either here on site or via any email on questions regarding the planning process. But maybe I could just ask, Olivier, do you have any perspective specifically on external environmental

trends as it relates to technological developments, security and trust in the Unique Identifier systems?

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND

Thank you very much. Olivier Crepin-Leblond speaking. I think that what we are seeing at the moment, one of the biggest trends that we're seeing at the moment, of course, is the advent of Artificial Intelligence, AI, and how that is going to impact the use of domain names and how that is going to impact the actual work of ICANN, both in the way that it works operationally, but also in the impact that it has in regards to the domain name market, which is likely to be as big as any other market that we're seeing today being absolutely rattled by this both generative AI, but also analytical AI, and the different forms of the AI that we are seeing. That's what I would launch into, but just as a very broad thing. Thank you very much.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much, Olivier. That is definitely an emerging trend, and we actually have another slide on that. Right before moving to that, I just wonder if there's anybody that has any comments on advancements technologically that may present opportunities to strengthen security and resilience of the Unique Identifier systems. Anybody with a perspective on that?

JONATHAN ZUCK

Hadia? Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI

This is Hadia Elminiawi for the record. This is not necessarily to strengthen the security and trust, but it's a trend which is, I think also it's been discussed in other venues within the ICANN. It's about domain names based on other technologies, like for example domain names, blockchain-based domain names, and how they can integrate.

I think now there is this thought of like, how do we integrate those domain names with the traditional ICANN domain names, if you may well. So, this is a trend, but it has different aspects. It does have some security aspects to it. There is some trust aspects related to it. There are some also governance aspects related to it, because this shows us a kind of governance outside of the ICANN governance model. So, yeah, thanks.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much, Hadia. Next, go ahead.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you so much for this presentation. I think this assumption makes sense for any technology and for any place, not only for the identifiers. The same technology, for example, if you're talking about AI, which can disrupt the market, can also help in abuse. So, it's the way it is used. It is the same with nuclear reactors and fusion also.

BECKY NASH Thank you. We do have a hand raised in the room, and then we'll come to the next speaker.

VICTORIA YANG Hadia, we see your hand was up earlier. Okay, all right. Now.

LANCE HINDS Lance Hinds for the record, and just to support what my colleagues say, and hope that as we think through trends analysis, that there's always that space to understand that AI can be a benefit, the blockchain can be a benefit. Sometimes it seems to me that there's this instinct to say that we better be careful, because this could be potentially dangerous. Because we understand that. But certainly, I really hope there's that conceptual space to recognize that the new technology coming in could really be a benefit to the operation as a whole. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG Thank you for highlighting that everything has two sides. Most of us think about external trends can be a threat. At the same time, we also have to look at maybe there is an opportunity aspect of the trend. Thank you.

BECKY NASH Very good dialogue. Is there anyone else that would like to give an observation of any sort as it relates to this technological

development aspect? Perhaps anyone following discussions about security? Oh, great. Please go ahead.

ADEBUNMI AKINBO

My name is Adebunmi Akinbo for the record. I know we talk a lot about identity threats based on AI and the likes. But the positive side is also trying to ensure that we have digital identity, which implies that government have to speak to government. Structures have to be set in place so that across the border, you can easily access and verify if there's a stolen identification. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much for your comment there. We'll just see around the room.

BUKOLA ORONTI

Claire has a hand up in the Zoom.

BECKY NASH

Oh, great. Claire. Claire, please go ahead.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Hi. Thank you, Becky. This is Claire Craig for the record. I just wanted to share a perspective. While it may not necessarily be technological advancement in the way that we are speaking, but definitely there could be an issue with respect to critical internet infrastructure, particularly as it relates to the SIDS and developing

nations. If those countries are unable to continue to improve their internet infrastructure, how then that goes back to the issue of DNS abuse and those kinds of issues that I think we need to pay attention to. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much, Claire. That is very insightful.

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR

Becky, Cheryl here. Sorry, jumping in. Don't forget about us up in remote land, Becky. Come on, darling. You do so well normally. Just following on from Claire, it strikes me that while we're looking at the infrastructure aspects, there may be, and I know this is a long bow, something that needs to be considered with regard to uptake of any successful new names out of the 2026 round.

If you're in a 2G environment, for heaven's sake, and there's many countries who still are, three or four, let alone if you have a significant 40 or upward percent of your potential population to use the Internet, having access to the Internet but no access to reliable power infrastructure, this sort of thing.

That's going to have a significant effect on the end user's choice to bother about getting involved with anything under some sort of new name label. You'd be hard pushed to do more than attach yourself briefly to whatever the strongest presence from a walled garden. And that, of course, is the antithesis of very much what at

least our new names processes are all about, offering competition and consumer choice. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much, Cheryl. I'm just checking if there are any other hands in the room. Okay. We don't see anything else, so we are happy to move to the next slide then. Oh, please.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER

We don't see any hands, but I have a comment from Olivier, and I can read it aloud for you. My question was that I could not relate the statistics shared with the eight responses received published in the Public Comment. Perhaps we can follow up offline afterwards.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much. Olivier, I believe this was the question you had regarding the draft FY27 Operating Plan and Budget, and we would be happy to follow up offline and then also provide a response to the entire group once we understand what your observations are. So, let's identify how best to do that.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Environmental factors, there's often a kind of cyclical nature of technological innovation, and when it first comes out, it has this sort of libertarian bend to it, and it creates a culture around that technology, as was the case of the internet in the 90s and the early 2000s, and then over time there's an increased utility to the

technology that brings regulators and even well-intentioned standards bodies to change the way that we're using the systems, and then firewalls go up, and then people end up using VPNs, you know, like if you want to get to Hulu from here, you need a VPN.

Well, not everybody knows how to use a VPN, so that changes who has access to resources as things evolve, and so what's happening next, because a blockchain-based naming system is now coming in where they bring with them the culture of this sort of libertarian culture with them and into a more mature, more regulated culture that we've evolved to over time with the DNS, and I think that there's going to be some interesting dynamics associated with that integration, in addition to just pure technical questions, but a clash of cultures where we've now grown used to rules, and I would say that the blockchain community probably has not.

BECKY NASH

Thank you, Jonathan, for your insights there. Please, Lance.

LANCE HINDS

Can I take you up on that for a couple of seconds? Only to say that in these discussions you heard continuously about the ICANN remit, and where our responsibility should end and anybody should begin, so I'm hearing you and wondering are we now looking at a shift in thinking because we kind of realize that ICANN may have some difficulty getting traction in other areas unless those other matters are addressed.

Infrastructure, the cultural issues, the other issues, is it that ICANN is thinking a little further ahead in terms of the kind of engagement that they're going to have now? Are you asking me? No, no, I'm sorry, don't mind me, I'm just saying.

BECKY NASH

So, today we're just collecting insights, and so the question I guess would be, do you have any insight on what you think an emerging trend would be to address either a threat or an opportunity, specifically in technological?

LANCE HINDS

I think the trend would be I think the trend would be that because you're now tackling a different audience than you would have been for the past 20 years, ICANN is going to have to consider their approaches in the next decade and even beyond.

BECKY NASH

Please go ahead, Olivier.

OLIVIER CREPIN-LEBLOND

Yeah, thank you very much, Olivier Crepin-Leblond speaking, and just circling back on the AI topic, if one wants to look at an opportunity for ICANN, the type of analysis now enabled by AI should be able to allow ICANN to actually learn even more about how domain names are used under top-level domains. At-Large, we are always concerned about the use by communities of domain

names and top-level domains, etc. We obviously are very interested in community TLDs and so on, and yet the statistics which are collected today are very basic.

But AI, through the understanding and we're not looking here at analyzing content, but analyzing the strings, AI has the ability through its statistical work and so on, to provide more insight and more information to ICANN as to whether its mission to have a consumer trust, consumer competition and also this variety out there, AI will allow ICANN and will help ICANN in understanding this better, I hope, with the right models. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much for your comment. I think if we move to the next slide, Olivier kicked us off with specifically our next trend area. Slide number four, please. Thank you.

So here we have already heard in the previous trend a lot of discussion about AI, but this is specifically a discussion about emerging trends on the AI impacts on ICANN and how will this impact, not just the technology, but the Multi-Stakeholder Model of ICANN.

So, that is also a question about, on the negative side, if there are bad actors that can use AI to generate and register domain names for malicious purposes faster than previously available techniques, how will that impact ICANN and the IANA functions? And then also just related to AI possibly generating Public Comments in an

overwhelming number, responding on mail lists, etc. What impact would that have on ICANN's overall MSM or Multi-Stakeholder Model and the consensus-based process?

JONATHAN ZUCK

I guess quickly think that there's the same sort of cyclical nature there because if we look at the domain investment community, for example, they had a lot of automated processes in place to generate Public Comments so that there would be hundreds and hundreds of comments that were essentially worded exactly the same because they were form-based.

And then we evolved to create a form-based comment system, making it more difficult for an automated system to generate hundreds of comments. But AI, in turn, will make it pretty easy to automatically fill out a bunch of forms. And so, I think it's going to be a little bit like an arms race when it comes to the influence of technology on the multi-stakeholder process, and I think we will have some challenges ahead to try and stay a step ahead of those technological advancements so that we know who we're hearing from.

BECKY NASH

Thank you. We see a couple of hands in the zoom room, so Siva, please go ahead.

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTHUSAMY

Yes, I'm in the room. Sivasubramanian. If malignant actors could use AI to register fake domain names or malignant domain names, I can also use AI to detect malignant domain names, to do research on what kind of abuse is happening and to what extent and what regions and who are the actors and so on.

I mean, I'm still not advocating that we should adopt AI technology, but as long as AI is being used, what ICANN could do is to develop its own version of AI, which sounds very big, but it could be quite easy. It could be a model within Anthropic, or it could be a model within Google, it could be a model within OpenAI, and we can ask them to develop a version that is focused on DNS-specific problems and to be an expert on DNS matters, and so that ICANN could use to counter the threats.

And about the participation, about the Public Comments threat that you talked about, there is a greater threat, the threat of participants, ICANN participants using AI in a manner that is unguided, and some participants could use AI to do the research and verify that research by looking at the sources.

Someone could take that research output and use it as such, and then they could go another extent wherein they draft Public Comments, statements and comments and questions and ask AI to fine-tune it, which is fine, but some could even ask AI to draft the comment, AI to draft the statement, AI to define the position, which could be in a way, in a smooth way, letting AI get deeper and deeper into the ICANN process, that ICANN should be wary of. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much for those comments. We do have Cheryl online. Please go ahead.

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR

Thanks, Becky. Pardon me, Cheryl Langdon-Orr, for the record. Sorry, I seem to have a frog in my throat. Forgive my slightly deeper, dulcet tones. With regard to this question, I love this question, just by the way. I'm a great fan of AI. I use AI. I'm not a high-end user like Jonathan is. I just puddle along.

But I do think, like many of us here, using AI to counter any malicious activities from AI use is a good thing that ICANN definitely needs to stay on top of. But when it comes particularly to the battle between the, as Jonathan quite delightfully put it, with the cycles that may go on with regard to domain name registration specifically, I think it's perhaps less ICANN's problem to develop the tools and more industries responsibility to do so, preferably in some sort of collaborative and joint way.

I do think ICANN should be more than open to partnership to assist and facilitate industry development of the appropriate responses, which I suspect will be AI-based. But the other thing is ICANN may in fact want to look at its industry players to somehow set up a system in the future that ensures, to some extent, that as much management of these risks is going on with the domain name industry players themselves.

With regard to the making Public Comments and drafting policy language, I think actually AI helping humans draft policy language is not a bad thing at all, but certainly the risk of having an unseemly and unusual amount of interest with regard to just boilerplate, I think is the right word, but just the same issue, just change the name, send the same response in.

Two things there. First of all, if there is a sudden and unusual uptake or should I say intake of Public Comments, I think we would notice 664 instead of 64 on a really great response should be something that could be analyzed. I would suggest in some situations 16 over the 6 that we might get if we twist enough arms would be an unusually large amount of input into some of these things. But we could use AI from a policy context to test, quite successfully these days, providing the right tool is chosen, how likely it is that such commentary coming in is produced by another AI tool and how much human interaction may go into the development of particular texts.

That's something many of us are used to using these days, trying to sift through applications for fellowships, for example. And finally, of course, there's a great selection of "are you human" checks and if that's what we have to put at the top of our forms-based public commentary intake tools, well, so be it. Thank you.

BECKY NASH Thank you very much, Cheryl. I think we have another hand up.
Lance? Oh, okay. Oh, Satish.

JONATHAN ZUCK Lance, and then Satish.

LANCE HINDS Let Satish go first.

JONATHAN ZUCK Oh, Satish?

SATISH BABU This is Satish for the record. This direct question as to what is going to be the impact of AI? Is it going to be more from the bad actors vis-a-vis the good actors? I think there are places where AI can help even those of us who are not trying to be bad actors but we want to meaningfully contribute.

There are situations in some of our Working Groups where there is an excessive amount of technicality, for example, detail, which yesterday we were in two sessions on the Latin Diacritic PDP and that is such a detailed kind of a thing that we ourselves forget sometimes the kind of consistencies when you look at 54 recommendations.

In those kinds of situations, AI can be quite a support for the people who are trying to kind of look at this and make sense of it. But I'd

like to highlight something that is not mentioned here, which is the very specific impact of AI on IDNs and UA.

Now, it turns out that not enough work has been done on this but there are indications that AI is going to break. Specifically, the way AI works is to tokenize and these tokens are of fixed size and when you bring IDNs into the fray, the way the IDNs break apart into tokens is quite different from the way ASCII does. Therefore, there are some unexpected side effects of applying AI blindly to IDNs and UA.

It outright breaks UA in some places. Now, I'm not sure who should do the research on this. Someone has to because it's going to be hitting us soon. I'd like to flag this issue that someone has to do the work on researching what is the specific impact of AI when it's applied to a kind of IDN-based domain name system. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much. Very insightful comments.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Just one last thought. The other impact of AI is similar again to the impact of search engines because increasingly people are looking for you to spend more time with their tool. Initially, Google's mission was to get you off of their site as quickly as possible and that's no longer their mission.

In other words, you do a search for a local hardware store, it's going to list the stores, the hours they're open, the reviews, all the things

you might have gone to multiple sites to learn before, you're getting as part of that response. AI is also very much the same thing that you ask a question to a search engine.

Now, if it's got built in AI, it's coming back with a paragraph of prose to answer the question and some footnotes, basically, of the sites it went to get those answers, but increasingly you may not be going to those sites or engaging the DNS per se to get the answers that you want online.

BECKY NASH

Thank you. Okay, we have a few more hands.

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTHUSAMY

Just a quick comment or suggestion based on what Cheryl said. I don't remember exactly what she said but what ICANN could also do to limit AI responses and to verify if an input or statement is AI generated is to do some kind of a plagiarism check. Not a plagiarism check but an AI check whether an input or a comment is generated by AI or by humans and AI could develop such a tool for ICANN.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much. Very insightful. I think we have one more hand up. Murray.

MURRAY MCKERCHER

Yes, this is Murray McKercher for the record. On some earlier discussions I heard in the meetings with respect to bad actors abusing the internet in general, there was the possibility for assistants with AIs to quickly register domain names causing some havoc online and disappearing before they could be caught by those that monitor those things. I thought that was an important thought to put forward. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much. Just for the interest of time, we're going to go to the next topic. Again, please raise your hand or let us know if you have any comments. I'm going to hand the microphone over to my colleague, Victoria. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you very much, Becky. For the record, my name is Victoria. I'm from the planning team. I can work as well. The next trend is on DNS marketplace. Basically, we want to hear your perspective about how the DNS marketplace has evolved and how it will evolve for the next 5 to 10 years, especially given that based on the observation of the past few years for the 2012 New gTLD round and the Next Round coming in a few months, how will that impact the marketplace? What's your observation or assumptions of how the marketplace is going to evolve? The floor is yours. Thank you. Please.

SETONDJI HOUNZANDJI

Sorry, I want to speak in French.

BECKY NASH

Why sorry?

SETONDJI HOUNZANDJI

No sorry. No sorry. To be clear, no sorry.

BECKY NASH

Speak in French.

SETONDJI HOUNZANDJI

My name is Setondji. I am a secretary for AFRALO. I would like to talk about an issue. An issue that is for me very important for someone like me who comes from Africa. When you come out of this room for example, you see a lot of sponsored stands from the sponsor. I went to look and I didn't see any African sponsor in the same room.

We talked today of the DNS industry. We as Africans, we are consumers. We participate; we are engaged in the financing of the industry because we bought some domain name but we are consumers. We don't have any money that comes to Africa that is due to this market of the DNS. I don't know if it has something to do with the sponsoring that ICANN.

Those costs are quite expensive and I want to bring the attention of ICANN on this. For example, African industry would want a

sponsor. It would be good if we have sponsors from Africa. People could come and engage and communicate but we don't have any. I think that for the next ICANN meeting we should talk about this question of African sponsors. Thanks.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you for your feedback. I can bring this to our meetings team as well and perhaps they can have a conversation with you on that. Thank you. Good observation. Yes, please.

LANCE HINDS

Lance Hinds the record. Sorry, I wasn't clear. You would like to see what? African companies being here being sponsors? I hope. Is that what?

SETONDJI HOUNZANDJI

I hope, yes.

LANCE HINDS

Are there African companies that can be out here sponsoring?

SETONDJI HOUNZANDJI

No, I said I hope we can have for the next ICANN meeting a few companies, private companies from Africa as like a sponsor.

LANCE HINDS

Sorry, I was just trying to clarify that. There is an African version of Tucows or affiliates or something like that who can come and perform the same kind of service for exposure. Okay, got you. Thanks.

VICTORIA YANG

Sebastien, please.

SEBASTIEN BACHOLLET

Thank you very much. When it comes to the issue for the DNS market, we're all running around saying oh, there should be more, there should be more. But maybe for those who know better, well, they come from Africa or Latin America because they don't have a lot of New gTLDs, so maybe that's better that way. I don't see why we would like to impose that type of model of more, more, more, lots, lots, lots everywhere.

I know that we as users, as final end users, we would like that there would be more community, more new extension in those regions. But maybe for the end user himself, it's a better choice because when you have too much of a choice, you have more risk of phishing, for example. We have more risk of phishing in other regions.

So, maybe they're better off this way, so everything that we in everything that we do, we should think about this. Maybe it's better to have one .Africa than 15 new extension that would have very little use. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

A good feedback, Sebastien. Thank you. Lance, do you have any other comment? Go ahead.

LANCE HINDS

I don't think I want to be the one to tell anybody whether they want to do this or not, with all due respect to Sebastien, in terms of deciding that it's best to go with dot Africa, if there's an economic wherewithal, in terms of people being able to purchase the TLDs and support TLDs within, that is something that should go forward.

The difficulty with the gTLD is how it originated in the first instance. And I think what you're trying to do is make something that was always very expensive, and trying to find a model to make it more affordable so other people could get it.

Now, the ones who spend the money in the first instance are not going to be too happy about that, because they believe you're devaluing the stuff, or they up the value of the gTLD. So, what do you do? You do these complicated things where you say that the gTLD could only be available to non-profs, and the non-prof must only have a certain revenue ceiling, or the companies must go there, because you're doing all these arrangements to make the big boys happy. If you're asking me to get involved in a gTLD, I kind of want to make the same money as the big boys. But if you give me the gTLD under certain conditions, after that I begin to wonder, what are we doing?

So, I think those are complicated matters. I'm happy to hear that there are companies in Africa who have the capacity to come here and do this, but we've got, I think, fundamental challenges with the way that process is managed outside of Europe or outside the United States.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you for your comment. Let's go to the online participants. So, we have Cheryl, and then Satish. Cheryl?

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR

Thanks, Victoria. Cheryl Langdon-Orr, for the record. Let me take this slide in reverse order. With the last two paragraphs, the changing in user preferences and the increased use in AI, et cetera, using App Six, all of that, and I'll bucket in here the alternative name existence as well. Are they going to have an influence on the general DNS marketplace? Yes, absolutely. Without any shadow of a doubt. But it isn't going to, in my very biased view, do more than cause a necessary plateau.

We may need to re-look at ICANN's assumptions on marketplace gains year in and year out, and how the ratio between renewals versus new names may play out as a result of these influences. It might be some slightly clever AI assisted analysis required. But yes, it's going to have an influence. It is going to have a pressure, but I'm not sure that that's necessarily a terribly bad thing, especially

when we think, oh, these are all over the top, and I'm sorry about using that terminology in a poor example here.

But many of them, if not all of them, still rely on a domain name system underneath that they are referencing and linking themselves to operate anyway. So, that said, the first part, I think, is also something that might be a matter of ICANN maturation happening. I think what will keep the pressure on new names, not just limited to branding and what we as end users would like to see, not just better branding, more opportunities in terms of competition and choice, maybe even some trust might develop, who knows, but also to have community and IDN gTLDs.

Those things I think are positives, and I'm not going to go into what the DNS marketplace has or hasn't done to assist you in those things, but I honestly think the main customer will be the second opportunities for secondary market where it is not the use of gTLDs that is going to be important to the continued earning of names being purchased and renewed that keeps ICANN going. It's going to be how many of these names become just part of trading portfolios because that is a significant amount of money involved in that game. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Cheryl, thank you. Let's move on to Satish.

SATISH BABU

Thank you very much. This is Satish for the record. I'm looking at the middle paragraph here. Now, if you look at the way AI has come into the office, I would not look at domain discovery as an isolated thing. It's a part of my workflow. Whatever I'm doing today, maybe at some point I want to look up a domain.

Now, the natural way I would perhaps be doing that is to be continuing with the style that I work in my daily job, which means there's something called retrieval augmented generation, which basically means I build a private model with all the inputs. It's not the generic LLM.

On top of the LLM, I add all my context-specific PDFs and all the reports, etc., and I build myself a kind of stack of my own that I work on a daily basis with. Now, I come to the office, go to that stack, I give commands as natural language kind of queries. Now, if I at some point want to locate a domain at that point, I would also prefer to continue that natural language approach. I won't go to Google and just type out something. I will say, find me the nearest tax consultant, for example.

Now, the way we discover domains is going to be transformed by the way our workplace changes. So, earlier we were using the search engines to locate these domains, but in future we'll be using the same AI stack that we're using for other purposes for this. Now, that is going to create a fundamental difference in the way we're going to discover domains, and of course that will drive the marketplace also. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Yes, please. Thank you, Satish.

ADEBUNMI AKINBO

Akinbo for the record. Okay, the last time I passed a comment, I mentioned digital identity. And I'm looking at the last part of the paragraph, finally, and looking at user clarity of the domain system. Then I'm thinking of where innovation comes in, and it comes to digital identity where we talk of the virus, 3D games, universe, cyber virus, where people can come in with an ID, with an identification, a form of identification. And then I get a domain that has something like, top of the head, let me just use .Africa.

So, if I do a market survey and I see where you want to come to my virus, DNS virus, Africa virus, you have to come with an email, and then you must come with a team. You would want to get a particular domain name that has .Africa at the back of it, because that's your ID. And we could boost the purchase or the revenue that comes into that particular domain name. Can it have an adverse effect?

Of course, we'll talk about data. You have to put your data register to become a part of that virus itself. So, I capture the data. What I do now goes to a long measure. Do I obey the rules? Do I break the rules? All of this would affect the DNS marketplace if it creates a sort of competition. So, there's a good, there's a global good, and there's always the danger of using it negatively. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Yes, please.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

I had my hand up if I can go first.

VICTORIA YANG

Yeah, thanks.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Amrita, for the record. I think, and I'll go from below to up. If we are talking about how the governance, stability and user clarity of domain names can be maintained, I think is trust and consumer choice.

Today the main issue which consumers or even legal enforcement is facing is domain name abuse. How it is mitigated or how you can actually raise your complaints. You know, many times you cannot mitigate it, but the process to mitigate it, raise it, is more important from a consumer. That builds trust. That will help even a small SME speak to another SME to build it because that's the market you want to look at. That's one part of it. The ease of getting it, the costs obviously, it's the businesses which will decide and business is pretty good at innovating, so I don't think that is something which is an issue.

In terms of how people are using, as Satish was mentioning, today it may be AI. AI is just a technology. It can be something else

tomorrow. Previously it was not there, but it is the market forces and the business who actually makes the business case of someone buying a domain name. It was not easy 10 years earlier. It is not easy today. There would be excuses, but there would be also benefits of having a domain name.

So, it is how it is translated or informed that what is in it for me as a business, as an individual, to take a domain name, vis-a-vis just going to a Meta or an Instagram and opening it there. There is a progression which we see happening. People first sell it in an app, then when they are growing in scale, they go and buy a website. It has to be easy and I think best leaving it to market forces.

If we look at the first para which you are mentioning, the next gTLD round, the new round was also open based upon what happened in the last round as well as where ICANN and the community saw opportunity. That is why it was open. So, this uncertainty was obviously taken into consideration when the discussion of the Next Round was opened. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you. Go ahead, please.

MOHAN RAIDU

This is Mohan Raidu from ISOC Hyderabad. Like the IoT applications use the IP numbers, what will happen is the AI agents, they will use the apps and then the domain names will be used by the AI agents. So, the demand for the DNS will be there, but right

now we are using the names directly. In a browser we go and give a domain name, but in the near future what will happen is that the AI agents will use it. The user will not directly use the domain name, but he will use an AI agent. So, it's going to be indirect use of domain names. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you very much. Okay. We would like to move on to the next trend, please. So, in the next slides we're going to look at some of the internal trends. The first one is about ICANN's Multi-Stakeholder Model. So, in summary we want to hear your perspective and insights and your experience about how ICANN's Multi-Stakeholder Model is going to evolve, especially about getting new and sustained community volunteers and also transfer interest into actions.

We have seen enough data that we can generate a lot of interest. People are interested in participating in ICANN, but there is data showing that there definitely are some challenges of transferring those interests into solid actions, like participating in PDP development or any other working group, et cetera.

So, we want to hear about your insights and how this is going to evolve eventually in the next five, ten years based on your observation and how that will impact ICANN's Multi-Stakeholder Model, the legitimacy of the model and et cetera.

LANCE HINDS

If I can share an experience, we in the Caribbean, in Guyana to be precise, we just had ICANN near you and there were some things that were quite deliberate. We went into a university environment because the idea was to see whether we could attract some students across the board to see whether they were interested in the policy development focus as an art and as a practice and then also talk to the young engineers as well.

I think we got the cross-section that we wanted, but it still dropped back to the guys who were interested in the DNS and they were interested in the innards and how the internet worked and then there was peering that came from the Internet Society and stuff like that.

So, there was still a struggle in terms of encouraging people to be part of the PDP process. I think that what came out at that time was that the persuading people, especially in the underserved and emerging sections about the relevance of ICANN on a day-to-day basis or even in terms of nationally and economic development, is still a work in progress and I think ICANN is going to have to go there.

Certainly, in my neck of the woods, when you try to engage, what is the benefit of ICANN? Yes, we know you were the stability factor of the Internet, but how do you help me with national development and governance and things like that? So, I think it's to find a way to continue to make the case in terms of a changing world and stuff like that.

Some youngsters say that they look at ICANN and they see guys there for 20 years or 25 years. Sometimes that could be a deterrent. I don't know what you do about that. Some people love ICANN and they're going to stay there for 25, 24 years. So, that is a balancing act that you have to walk, but that is just I'm just suggesting what we experienced and it's to look at that to see as you design a way forward. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK

That's the end of the Victorian era. We have to move on to the Edwardian era here and thanks a lot for joining us and I'm sure more questions will come up and we'll bring them up via the email list and things like that, but thank you for coming and doing this environmental questionnaire and things.

LANCE HINDS

Sure.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you very much for the interest. I see there are hands in the room and I also see comments here. I'm going to stay for after this session to hear your feedback. Also, you're all welcome to send your additional feedback to planning@ICANN.org. Heidi and the team can share that contact. We would love to hear from you. We do have one more trend. I know we're running out of time so your input will be very important for us, so thank you. And I'm going to stay a little bit for after the session. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK Is Cheryl next? Who's hosting the next piece? Is it Cheryl?

HEIDI ULLRICH No, it's Claire and Luca left.

JONATHAN ZUCK Claire, I think you're up.

CLAIRE CRAIG Hi, thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK This is Claire.

CLAIRE CRAIG Are you hearing me okay?

JONATHAN ZUCK Yes, ma'am.

CLAIRE CRAIG Good. If staff could bring up the ALAC strategic FY26 strategic priorities and co-activities, we just want to remind you of this document which will feed into the next segment of this conversation. Is it possible that you could make it just a little bit bigger? I don't know. I do have my copy here anyway. Just wanted

to remind you that we had selected three strategic objectives, which were strategic objective one, strategic objective three and four.

In total, out of those three strategic objectives, we looked at nine strategies that we wanted to pursue, as well as we came up with some co-activities and some possible initiatives. In the last segment of this, we will talk about the At-Large capacity development initiatives that would have come out during the last few months, which related to this and to see how well we are doing.

In the interest of time, we just want to go straight to the next segment, which is the ALAC CIP, because we do have a tool that we wish to use to continue to track how ALAC is doing with managing these strategic priorities. I just wish to thank Justine for the work that she would have done. We're not ready for this tool yet.

Cheryl sent a link. If you didn't get the link, then Cheryl will share her screen for the next segment. This document that is being shown on the slide that was just shown on the slide, I wish to thank Justine for the work that she would have done in developing this and working with the RALOs to help them to track their responses to ensuring that we meet these strategic objectives and to implement some of the initiatives.

In the last segment, we're going to be focusing on how ALAC has been doing with respect to this, but what we need to do now is really have persons commit to how are we going to get the rest of these initiatives done. We had said it at our last meeting and we're

going to continue to say it again. We need names to be identified next to these things.

It shouldn't be just one person trying to reach out to people to get them to do what they need to do, particularly for the ALAC, but we do need names. I will turn over to Cheryl Langdon-Orr, who will guide us through this segment with now. Cheryl?

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR

Thank you very much, Clare. Cheryl Langdon-Orr for the record. There we go. Look at the magic. It's not animated, but if you start it from the slideshow from the beginning, that would be brilliant. It is animated if you get it going from the beginning. Thank you. Perfect.

We seem to be taking up more space than the screen for some reason, but we'll see how it goes. It seems to be bigger than it needs to be. This is just a reminder of charts that we have and FY financial year timelines that we have looked at, at previous meetings. Of the 40 particular core activities that ALAC has identified as part of their five-year Continuous Improvement Program running for the five years of the five-year Strategic Plan, of those 40, half of them were listed as being possible to run in FY26. Well, no surprise, ladies and gentlemen, we're not going to manage to do all half of them, all 20 of them, in FY26. If you click again, the next chart should come up.

Certainly, in my screen, there we go, it's my problem, not yours. You'll see, however, that a goodly amount of these ones for let me start that sentence again, a goodly amount of these identified for FY26 actually relate to the ICANN strategic goal 1.2 and I note that strategic goal 1.2 is also something that ALAC has specifically wanted to focus on.

Now, after this section of the agenda, we'll be driving more deeply to that excellent tool and activities that we had a brief look at on screen in a minute, and that is very much about capacity building from the ALAC's perspective and meeting many of, if not all, of the indicators and objectives that this SG1, the strategic goal 1.2, actually has.

If you click again, you'll find a hyperlink, yes, and if you can follow that hyperlink, please. One small click. There we go. For heaven's sake, you should already be just oh, my apologies. Can you just let me share screen, darling?

In the interest of time, you should all have that link when it goes up on screen and I will, sorry, in the wiki file and I will suggest that we take a little bit of time at perhaps even a future ALAC meeting to explore the tool which we have modified in as much as we've hidden a whole lot of gory bits that you'll all get scared if you have a look at, but most importantly, you do have access to it and ALAC members, if you would look at, as a viewer, the sheet that you will get access on, make sure it's available for everybody with a link to the one that says presentations and we will pick this up later.

Apologies for that snafu, Claire, but back to you for the next agenda item and a tool that we definitely know we can have a look at.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Thank you, Cheryl. You know these things happen and when the three of us who are presenting virtual, it's a little bit more challenging, but we're thankful that we do have the technology to be able to do this.

This is Claire Craig for the transcript record again. If you could bring back up the tool, the one that we had previously, the capacity development, yes, that one. I'm not sure if you could make it any bigger, but we just wanted to go through and speak to, you would have seen as Cheryl mentioned, the strategic objective one and we will see how we have done on this as an ALAC, strategic objective 1.2.

We are in the capacity development. We would have completed the At-Large fireside chats and I wish to also note that while we have been working, while a lot of these would have been facilitated by Justine, we do have a number of persons who have supported this initiative to get most of these done. I'm not going to call any names because if I forget some of the names, then I would not want persons to feel as if they have been left out.

We have completed the fireside chat on participating in ICANN working groups. We have also completed, if you scroll down, the ALAC ROP appointee metrics adjunct document. That is something

that has been done and thanks to the work of everyone who was involved in making that happen. We still have ongoing the GAC and ALAC regulatory development briefing sessions and there are some things, as Cheryl said, some things that we did not get done and they are still in the pipeline but just want to highlight the things that we would have gotten done.

Strategic strategy 1.1.3 fostering an appealing environment for the next-gens. We did meet with an At-Large call to the ICANN84 fellows and NextGen that was completed for December. So, thanks to those who made that happen. If we scroll down, you would see there are things that are scheduled and continuing to be ongoing. Strategic strategy strategic goal 1.2 enhance the agility and effectiveness of policy and advice development.

We see the policy capacity development, At-Large briefing session informed consensus and approach to At-Large position development. That has also been completed. You would see just under that are we on the same page? I think you've gone a little too far ahead of me. Then there is the Operations Capacity Development.

My page six is different to yours. Operations capacity development engagement. ICANN85 we would have done the At-Large art of productive meetings that was held yesterday. Scrolling down again, the strategic goal 4.1 which dealt with strengthening partnerships with relevant stakeholders to reinforce the shared

responsibility of ensuring secure and stable internet Unique Identifier systems.

The DNS Abuse engagement ACES. The phishing awareness, train the trainer. We are in the process of that is pending completion. Then we do have the DNS Capacity Development part one introduction to DNS abuse mitigation series that would have been done at the CPWG session which was held yesterday.

The At-Large meets OCTO. That is completed at ICANN85. There is also a session on the 11th of March and that is scheduled. I think finally we do have the DNS abuse engagement ICANN85, the At-Large plenary progressing the DNS abuse mitigation agenda. That is scheduled for this week on March 10th.

We look forward to getting that done. As Cheryl did say, there are a number of activities that we initiatives that still need to be scheduled. We know that the RALOs are doing their own initiatives but this is working through on the ALAC CIP. I open the floor if there are any questions for what has been done or anything concerning our FY26 strategic priorities. Cheryl, I don't know if you wanted to say something before I went ahead.

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR

It is quite an amount to try and digest. We recognize that there is a lot. A lot has been done.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Yes.

PARI ESFANDIARI

Sorry. Claire, I had my hand up for the last 20 minutes.

CLAIRE CRAIG

I thought your hand was up from the previous session. Go ahead, please.

PARI ESFANDIARI

Thank you. Pari Esfandiari speaking for the record. Yes, my hand was up since previous comments when Becky was talking but it is relevant also to this section of the work. I know that these strategic priorities were set recently. However, I think over the last 10 days, last week, we witnessed the outbreak of a full-fledged war which further contributes to global insecurity and deepening geopolitical fragmentation.

I think these priorities need to be revisited now both in the consideration for the Environmental Scanning that Becky discussed, but more importantly, in the face of the war which is happening, 90 million people have been shot out of the internet.

The war is expanding to the region, meaning more fragmentation impacting the core of the internet. I am not suggesting we do this strategy completely, but I think at least, at minimum, we need to have a new discussion and set the priority based on those realities on the ground.

Also, I think when we talked about previously about multi-stakeholder and voluntarism, we have to pay attention that if ICANN or ALAC remain indifferent to the realities on the ground, specifically issues such as this, when a nation is shot out of the internet, it impacts the spirit of volunteers and results in them seeking other venues for being more effective.

So, what I am trying to emphasize is the importance of us as ALAC specifically and as ICANN to connect to the realities on the ground which are really concerning. Thank you.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Thank you, Pari. This is Claire Craig for the record. Pari, you may not have noticed, but I had my hand up for the last session as well. That was exactly not the way you would have said it. You said it quite eloquently. In my notes in preparation for this meeting, one of my concerns was the geopolitical environment that we currently face.

I think that is something that ICANN really needs to address at this point in time because from where we sit, it impacts almost all the strategic objectives that they have set out and it needs to be revisited as a matter of urgency.

In another note, I also sent a note to staff asking them when can we have this on our OFBWG Working Group agenda to discuss our FY27 strategic objectives because this plays directly into that. I think you

have been I don't know, you probably dropped into Trinidad and Tobago and saw my notes on my desk and got into my head.

I'm glad that we are both on the same page and I'm sure that we are not the only ones. There are a number of people who are thinking along the same lines so that we need to really make an effort to address this as a matter of urgency.

I think that we are running out of time. We have two minutes left on this call and we want to be respectful of our interpreters. We really thank them for the work that they have done. If there is any one more burning question or comment, I will take that before I close off.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Claire, Sebastien has his hand up. As much as I have tried to avoid calling on him all day, I think we have to give him one chance before lunch to speak.

CLAIRE CRAIG

I'm not seeing his hand up in the Zoom room. Sebastien, go ahead please.

SEBASTIEN BACHOLLET

I wanted to applaud the comments made by Claire and by Pari. Personally, I think it would have been better to decide what subjects were more important to discuss today for the future. We had a frame that was already set up for the discussion. We could

have chosen subjects ourselves or themes ourselves. Sometimes it's quite complicated to discuss things that are quite important, but we haven't had any preparation. I hope that one day we will change that process. Thank you.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Thank you for that comment, Sebastien. This is Claire Craig, for the record. We do have an opportunity because one of the questions from the Board to the ALAC deals with the strategic priorities as the ICANN Strategic Plan. This session was also to help us to prepare for responding to the Board on that. If anyone has any input that they would like to make to that comment, there is a document.

If staff could share the document, we would like to hear from you so that when we meet with the Board on Wednesday, I think it's Wednesday morning, is that session, we would be in a position to have an informed ALAC and At-Large position on that.

With that note, I wish to thank all of you for your contribution to this session. I do wish you an excellent ICANN85, those of you on the ground. Those of us who are participating online, we do the best that we can to be here with you. Enjoy the rest of the day. Take care. Thanks, staff. Thank you to the interpretation team for the work that they have done. Talk soon. Bye-bye, everyone. On behalf of Bukola and myself, we thank you very much. Bye-bye.

BUKOLA ORONTI

Thank you, everyone. Bye.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]